

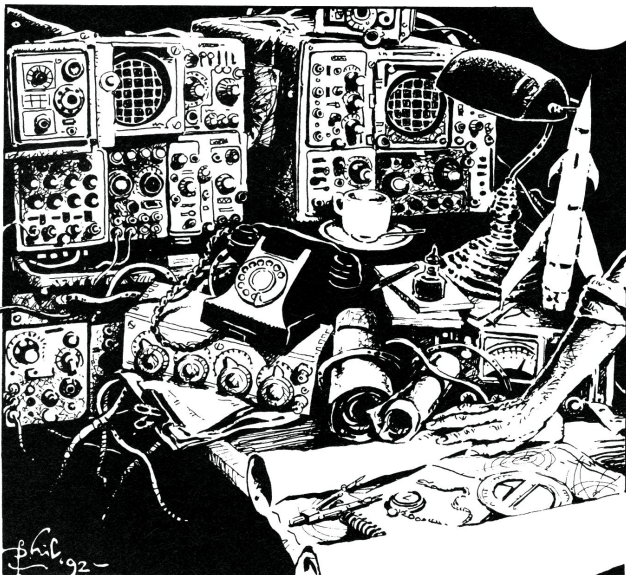
Prelude

NIGHTSHADE

Nightshade pulled at his paisley bow tie until the knot unravelled. He sighed heavily and tossed the tie onto his desk. Above his head the broad, flat blades of the fan whirled soothingly, fluttering the papers and blue-prints which were piled before him.

It was *far* too hot. Sweat soaked his back just above the waistline of the old cricketer trousers he'd dug out of his wardrobe the evening before, and there were ugly stains developing under the arms of his shirt which he'd only ever imagined happened to Nazis in *Tarzan* movies. The black bakelite phone was set to one side and refused to ring. Nightshade glared at it.

Outside, in the hot August night, there were few stars visible, although the crescent of Venus flared brilliantly behind the launch-pads. Nightshade shot one last appealing look at the phone and then switched off the lights, standing still for several moments as his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness and the whirring hush of the fan settled over him. He negotiated his way past the chairs and instruments and gazed at the night sky, setting his face so close to the glass that the window steamed up.



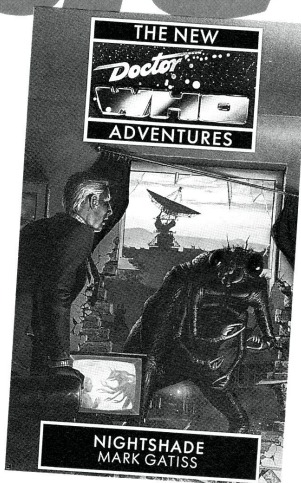
Somewhere up there, his rocket crew had gone missing.

There had been no news of the ship since contact had been lost twelve hours ago. Eventually, he'd decided to wait by himself, insisting that the remainder of the team get some rest. The crew in observatory three would probably hear from the rocket first and they would call him immediately. Several times, he thought he'd heard the faint tinkle of the telephone and picked it up, only to be greeted by a low, mocking buzz. Rubbing his eyes, he hitched himself onto the edge of the desk and yawned.

Something in the sky caught his attention and he snapped around but it was only a shooting star, leaving a trail on his retina just as it had on the purple dusk.

What the hell had gone wrong? Where *were* they? And, perhaps most important of all, what had they seen?

The first Men in Space! He could still hardly comprehend it. It had been his skill, his expertise, which had guided that fragile metal tube up into the sky. His would be the glory if the mission proved successful and his the bitter failure if those three brave pioneers



failed to return.

The double doors clattered and Barclay shambled into the room.

"Sir?"

"No. Leave the light, Barclay. I like it. Leave it off."

"Righto, sir."

Nightshade swung round on the desk. "Aren't you supposed to be getting some rest?"

"Couldn't sleep, Professor. You know how it is." Barclay felt his way through the darkness and found a chair. He pulled it towards him and flopped gratefully down. "No news?"

"No. Nothing."

Barclay found the telephone and put his hand close by, ready. He swivelled his eyes round to look at Nightshade, now a lean silhouette against the window. "You know, I can't help thinking, sir. What if it had been me up there? Up there on the... the other side of the air. Would I be able to cope? What do you think's happened to them?"

Nightshade saw the three astronauts again in his mind's eye. Robert Carson, Daniel Barclay and Ian Martin. Three brave men of whom the world was still ignorant.

"Any number of things," he said at last. "Meteor shower. Pressure drop. Oxygen starvation. That damned gimbal system I was never happy with." Nightshade turned to Barclay and smiled, though his face was invisible in the darkness. "They'll be all right, Barclay. I'm sure of it."

The telephone rang loudly. Barclay almost knocked it off the desk in his excitement. Nightshade dashed to the wall and the room was suddenly bright with painful yellow light.

"Hello? Yes. Yes? What? You're sure? Thanks!" Barclay slammed down the



telephone.

"Well?" Nightshade's voice was husky with anticipation.

"The rocket, Professor. It's landed!"

Nightshade's face flushed with excitement and he rose to his full height.

"Cue grams," said a soft voice close by. Strident music belted throughout the room, reached its climax and shut off. Several bright lights flooded the room.

"Super! We'll done everyone. Bloody good one." A small man in braces dashed onto the set and clapped Nightshade's shoulder. "Well done, Edmund."

Edmund Trevithick smiled and picked up the bow tie he had tossed onto the desk. Stuffing it into his trouser pocket, he looked across at the young man who had been Barclay and smiled. "Fancy a pint, Reg?"

They wandered off the set, past the bulky cameras and out of the studio onto the broad terrace of Alexandra Palace. London twinkled below them, a sea of lights bobbing in a blue wreath of smog.

"Ought to do something about this wretched air," muttered Trevithick as they clattered down the steps towards

Muswell Hill.

His companion smiled and coughed sympathetically. "Felt good tonight, didn't you think?"

Trevithick nodded and launched into his traditional homily on the virtues of live television and how it beat low-paid ruddy theatre any day. The two men wound their way through the park, chatting amiably and anticipating with delight the Guinness on tap at *The Green Man*. The pub would probably be fairly empty, Trevithick knew, as most of the locals were addicted to his television series. They would file back into the lounge bar, shaking their heads in bewilderment or fixing the actors with a wry smile as if to say "You nearly had me behind the sofa this week!"

Trevithick would smile back, enjoying the recognition. But he wondered how long this spell of fame could continue. Would anyone even remember him ten years from now?

What Edmund Trevithick could not have then known was that Fate had prepared an appointment with a strange little man in a straw hat. A man who would lead him into undreamt realms of adventure...

Mark Gatiss



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Prelude

Love and War

They came to the Great Wheel, in the middle of the glade. The Wheel was a huge wooden table which continually rotated on a pivot. In its centre was imbedded a sword, and the shadow of the sword turned around the table depending on what time it was in Puterspace.

They had made their way there through their individual battles. Jan had faced the Trickster again, who'd asked what he knew about card games. Christopher had been scared by the Mother Goddess, who taunted him about being neither a man nor a woman, and Maïre and Roisa had to face the Whole Inhumanity Of Humanity, for the twentieth time.

"It is time for us to look at the future..." Christopher, in his long robes, sat slowly down in his seat. He was finely-chiselled, bald and tattooed, his face not quite of either sex. "Join me, Maïre."

Maïre, who had sat down, reached across to touch palms with Christopher. Her mass of hair was bound in dreadlocks, and she wore a simple black robe. She was the Priestess of the Travellers, as Christopher was their Priest. "We spin the possibilities, and see what the Goddess knows about us, beyond what we are. Let the first god appear."



It was Eros, in a male form: a golden waistcoat and centre-parted fair hair. "You're getting complex, aren't you?" he sighed. "Love all over the place. A new lover for Jan..."

"What a surprise!" muttered Roisa, frowning. Jan looked down at his boots.

"Nobody will remain quite together. Things will get stirred up and shattered. Listen, if I tell you more, you'd avoid it, and you really don't want to. That's the nice thing about me, I'm always right!"

Maïre nodded to Roisa as the god vanished. "He certainly is..." she smiled.

The second god appeared on the centre of the table. It was Diana, the goddess of women and wild places. Maïre, Roisa, Fiona and the other female Travellers instantly knelt. "We welcome you, Protector Of Women," Maïre whispered.

"Oh, do get up, please!" Diana snapped. "We haven't time for pleasantries. I'm just in front of Her, and I have to tell you, someone is going to be terribly hurt. When he arrives, don't let him be involved with you, don't let his steward near you. Jan, you *do* have a choice, you can..."

And Diana was swept away in a flutter of owls' wings. A sudden shadow burst across the table, and a coldness. The Travellers looked up, and there was



Death.

Death looked around them all with an indulgent smile. She was wrapped in vast robes, but wore red hair that day. "My children..." she told them. "Three quarters of you shall join me soon."

There was a gasp from the assembled Travellers in their colourful Puterspace forms.

Jan jumped up, pulling his sword from its sheath. "Shall I?" he yelled. "Is that me you're talking about?"

"Hush!" Maïre raised her hand.

"That's not allowed. You know that."

"So how shall I know, then?"

"You won't..." Death grinned directly at Jan, and the warrior slowly sat down. "Time's Champion is on his way. My old friend, who has danced with me on the surface of Earth's moon, and bargained with me so many times. He brings his steward, also, as a sacrifice. He will change all your lives, indeed, most lives on this world. Be kind to him, won't you?"

And then Death was gone.

"What did she mean?" Roisa asked, hugging herself.

Christopher turned his head slightly. "So high a number... Perhaps we should leave this place."

"No," Roisa ran a hand back over her cropped hair. "No, we need to stay in one place a while, let the children grow a bit. You know how unreliable Death is. And besides, how can we avoid what she has for us?"

"This is a matter for greater debate," Christopher decided. "We must let all the tribe have their say, and see where the group-will takes us. We should not have any part in another war."

Far away in the virtual reality of Puterspace, something was watching



the Travellers at their table. It was an ancient thing, powerful and plotting. And it knew that its moment was fast approaching. When the Travellers had grown content and unworried again, in a few months time, then would be the time to strike.

Professor Bernice Summerfield swung her satchel low across the grass, cutting the heads off several mushrooms. One hand was stuffed into the pocket of her chinos, the other was spinning and toying with the bag.

"You know I'm waiting..." she told the mushrooms. "Anticipating!" Her voice had risen to a rather tuneless bellow. "Things I may never possess, but while I'm without them, try a little... tenderness..."

"Boss, boss, it's okay, we're up..." Clive Aubrey climbed out of his tent, rubbing his eyes. "Where have you been?"

"Joycetown, on foot, since dawn. I brought back a new PH monitor, a large bottle of whiskey..."

"God, where did you learn to drink?" Clive winced. He half-remembered something about sitting in his underpants last night, laying a bet on

something to do with his mother.

"Doctor Daniels' college, whiskey-land, planet of Scotch..." Benny swung her satchel into her tent, and took a deep breath of the morning air. She was pretty, in a sharp sort of way, as Clive had often realised but never quite got round to expressing. Short black hair, cut so that strands of it hung over her brow, emphasising her mobile eyebrows and ironic eyes. Her mouth could often purse in self-mockery, but there was something about the curve of it that was rather hurt. English hurt, like there were things she'd rather not talk about. She was thirty; had been thirty at a party in the group's tents. Clive sighed. There would *always* be a gap.

He joined her, and they both gazed up at the Arch.

It was a simple silver arc, glittering in the sunlight, soaring in one span high above the dewy grass of the planet Heaven.

"I just wish we knew what it was..." Clive sighed. The rest of the team were stirring in their tents. Bernice's archaeology unit had been on Heaven for four months, investigating the relics of the vanished Heavenites.

"If wishes were horses," Benny leant

on his shoulder, "we'd all be trampled to death. Wake them all up, then, and let's get on with it."

"You're a hard woman, boss!" Clive clambered back into the tent.

"It has been said..." Benny nodded, staring at the arch once more.

Elsewhere, Operative James Miller stared at the trooper who stood in front of him at attention. "Are you having me on, lad?" he growled.

"No sir! It was there, sir. In the night sky, right above me!"

Miller walked behind the trooper, frowning at the corporate logos that decorated the man's uniform shirt. "And what was it like?"

"A big sphere! A planet! A new planet, right up there!"

Miller nodded slowly, and patted the trooper on the shoulder. "I know Galatron sends you lot Vrax substitutes every now and then. If you want to tell me about that..."

"No sir! It was *real* sir!"

"Then you can get out, and come back in an hour. And then it will not have been real, you will have been dreaming, is that understood?" Miller spoke gently, but the young trooper still looked hurt. After he left, the older man sighed. "In the Dalek war, Judith, you got soldiers who didn't sulk if you shouted at them..."

Judith, his secretary, grinned. "Are you certain he's not telling the truth?"

Miller grunted. "Exactly the opposite, lass. I'm sure he is. That's what worries me..."

Far away in time and space, deep in the butterfly tunnel of the spacetime vortex, a police box that was not a police box flew past time and space.

Inside the box, a Time Lord stood in a darkened laboratory, and stared deep into a cube that he held in his hand. The cube was whispering to him, about dirigibles and doubts, about things that had been lost from memory, and terrible pain that would happen in the near future.

From a nearby room, Ace called out in a nightmare.

But the Doctor reacted not at all.

His tesseract was telling him of love and war.

Paul Cornell

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Love And War*
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Paul Cornell,
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Prelude

And when he was old, they put him out to pasture. They gave him a dacha that overlooked the lake and assigned him a flat faced nurse who'd once worked for the KGB. During the short alpine summer, when the pollution reports were favourable, she would wheel him out onto the veranda to sit in the sun. They kept a bracelet on his wrist, a battery of miniature sensors that monitored his heart, blood sugar and adrenaline levels. The stainless steel buckle deliberately *too* complex for his arthritic fingers to unfasten. Every other second it broadcast a burst of medical data, relayed through the TV in the lounge and onto the mainframe under the school. A constant mechanical deathwatch. His final decline bitmapped in glorious 3D under the ground.

His nights were filled with nightmares, as if the sum of all his fears had finally broken through the decaying walls of his conscious mind. He would wake screaming, his body rigid with terror, clawing at the smothering blankets. Even so, as his memories faded he found himself embracing his night terror – as the only surety of his existence.

There was a horse in the field below the dacha, a magnificent white stallion, eighteen-hands high, with hooves as big as dinner plates, which had gone bad tempered with old age. Once in a while a tall man with blonde hair would enter the field and talk to the horse.

He was aware that he too had visitors, men and women, mostly in uniform. They too would speak to him but, like the horse, he was aware only of the tone, not the substance, of their words. He felt himself in competition with the stallion, a contest to see who could die first.

It was difficult to say when he first became aware of the boy. He seemed to have sprung up like a mushroom on the veranda one day, while he was dozing. The boy never seemed to wear his boots, although the rest of his uniform was always crisp, the blue UN flashes startling against the deep camouflage green. The old man would open his eyes to find the boy squatting comfortably beside the wheelchair. He got the sense that the boy was somehow watching over him.

New dreams overcame him in his sleep. A forest, in some far country where the air was hot and moist under the spreading canopy. Someone would speak to him in his dream, sometimes it was a woman, sometimes it was the boy, sometimes a mixture of both. The dreams filled him with a sense of loss like a fading summer.

After a while, a week, a month, a year – he didn't know – he spoke to the boy. "Who are you?" he asked.

The boy looked at him with strangely familiar eyes. Girls eyes, thought the old man. "Don't you know me, baba?" he asked.

The old man shook his head, he'd forgotten so much. "I'm dying," he said suddenly.

"Yes baba," said the boy, "I know."

"Everybody dies," said the old man, "me, the horse, even you."

"Yes baba."

"Do you know why we die?"

"No baba," said the boy.

"Because we live."

The boy was silent. Out on the pasture the stallion restlessly pawed the ground.

"You like the horse?" asked the boy, finally.

"It's a stallion," said the old man as if it was important.

"You want to ride it?"

"I can't," said the old man, restless in his wheelchair.

"I think you want to," said the boy.

Mounting was easier than he thought it would be; the boy was stronger than he looked, boosting him onto the horse's back. He felt the hot skin of the horse against his legs as he got astride, the muscles shifting under the skin.

"I say," he told the boy, "I think I've forgotten how to do this."

"Nothing is forgotten," said the boy.

"Don't tell *me*," he snapped, "tell the horse."

The boy smiled and raised his hand. In that moment the old man saw himself reflected in the boy's expression.

Suddenly he remembered it all. He remembered the path in the forest, the girl with the basket on her head, being young and full of impetuous blood.

"Wait," said the old man. There were questions he wanted to ask, things he wanted to say.

The flat of the boy's hand came down hard on the stallion's rump.

The old man forgot the boy as the horse sprang away. He was amazed at the power still in the old animal. Amazed at the strength in his own limbs, as he gripped with his knees and held onto the mane with both hands. The horse raced across the pasture, its hooves thundering on the grass like the sound of distant guns.

The perimeter of the field was marked with a barbed wire fence but the stallion took it easily, snorting with contempt. They hit the medacam surface of the access road that ran down to the main road.

He felt the wind rip around his face, stripping away the haze that had consumed his mind. He changed his posture, riding with his back down, head thrust forward into the wind. The stallion responded by picking up the gallup.

He saw the school to his left, framed by the blue white peaks of the mountain beyond. People were outside, men and women with startled faces running to intercept him. He wanted to shout to them, to tell them that it was all right, that he'd discovered the secret of eternal youth but his lungs were full of cold air and pain. The horse, too, was breathing in ragged uneven gasps, spittle flying back from drawn lips.

Across the landing field they raced. Where the helicopters clattered and buzzed. Across the perimeter road and onto the final pasture before the lake. He risked a look behind. A land cruiser was chasing them, bouncing across the rutted field. The driver taking insane risks to reach them in time.

Too late. Ahead the edge of the cliff bisected his view, the far shore of the lake just visible above and beyond that, the cool peaks of the mountains. A line of wire mesh across the lip to stop the unwary falling.

One last fence.

The hated bracelet on his wrist started to scream. A last technical defence against oblivion.

The stallion took the fence with a metre to spare.

The ground vanished from beneath them.

He felt the artery burst like a blow inside his skull.

Horse and rider were both dead before they hit the water two hundred metres below.

And when he was dead they put him in the ground. They gave him a funeral with full military honours and buried him under the Union Jack. After the young soldiers had been paraded away, the old soldiers went inside to tell their lies and to try drink enough to sleep that night.

It was almost dawn by the time General Bamera climbed into bed and her husband's arms. He'd taken it very well considering it had been his horse.

"Nothing is forgotten," she said before she fell asleep.

They woke her an hour later, to tell her that a mountain in America had just exploded.

Ben Aaronovitch

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by Ben Aaronovitch,
with a cover by Peter Elson,
published by
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Prelude

The Highest Science

The charges were blown at 0700 hours on the sixth day after the raid. The Board believed that whatever traps the attackers might have rigged inside the gene laboratory could not withstand a controlled detonation of plutex. It was one of Project's newest toys and promised to blast through the reinforced megalanium of the doors without damaging the contents of the lab inside.

That was the idea, anyhow. The Board had acted with typical caution and withdrawn all salaried staff to shelters on the far side of the planet. A couple of dozen workers on attachment, cleaners mostly, were kitted out in protective gear and placed outside the lab. The plutex went off on schedule and they moved in as instructed. For Cooper, an ex-con assigned to sanitary inspection duties on Checkley's World four years before, the blood was the worst part.

When the smoke and dust of the blast had settled, the team leader verified the air as clean. Cooper removed his heavy helmet and pulled off the goggles and respirator beneath. He blinked. The dripping walls of the cavern glistened red in the glow of the emergency lighting. The fluorescing strips revealed carnage. The bodies of the patterning crew, their faces familiar to Cooper and his mates from the canteen, lay slashed and hollow around their computers. The machines had been similarly gutted and their smashed screens sparked erratically. Over by the specimen cases was Dr Pethering, almost unrecognisable under what had been done to him.

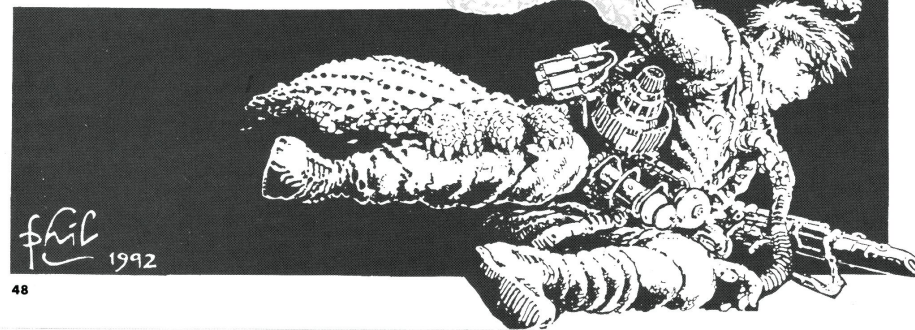
The jars and containers themselves had been shattered by a repeater rifle and their contents released to flounder and die.

Cooper forced himself to take another look at Pethering's body. Two bloated blobs, crawling brains with leech-like suckers, were affixed to the scientist's face. Sensing movement nearby, the blind creatures raised their shapeless mouths up to Cooper. Calmly, he obeyed his briefing. The chemical spray from his backpack shot from the nozzle clasped in his gloved hand. The specimens screeched and died. The froth hardened around Pethering's head, forming a grotesque death mask of his remaining features. Cooper backed away, gasping for air. Another of the creatures, larger and with eyes, scuttled from the darkness and sank its teeth into his boot. He angled the nozzle downwards and squirted, at the same time stamping his foot to try and crack its shell. It did not falter.

"Yanos!" Cooper shouted over at his mate, the team leader. "Get it off me!" Yanos and two other men hurried over and aimed their sprays at the beast. Cooper felt its grip relax and sighed. He moved to kick it off and it bit back, sinking sharp teeth into his boot. Still, he wasn't really worried. Nothing could penetrate the strengthened coating.

The teeth penetrated the strengthened coating. Cooper screamed and fell. "Yanos, Yanos!"

He looked up. Yanos looked down at him, the camera on his helmet adding a third eye to the stare. The team leader's hand went to his ear as he received



instructions from the Board. He signalled the other men away from Cooper. They obeyed.

Yanos leaned over. "Sorry, friend," he told Cooper, "but the Board say that with Pethering dead, the computer files wiped and FXX Q84 taken, that thing is more important than you." He sighed. "Bad luck, old chum."

Cooper felt the creature devouring his leg. Yanos remained near, his head bowed to allow the camera a good view of the death. They'd been good mates, shared drinks together, but Cooper could understand Yanos' actions. If the positions had been reversed he'd have done the same. You didn't disobey orders from the Board on Checkley's World.

The Chelonian ship thundered on, starlight dancing on its irregular surfaces. At its heart, General Fakrid sifted through intelligence reports on their destination. The planet was an optimum breeding ground and telestomony suggested that a variety of unclassified species grew there. As expedition leader it would fall to Fakrid to compile a dossier on them. He viewed the prospect with almost the same enthusiasm he normally reserved for the extermination of parasite infestation. And there would be plenty of that sport to enjoy on Vaagon as well.

There was a knock on the door. "Come," said Fakrid.

Jinkwa, his First Pilot, shuffled in. As always when they met, Fakrid glowed with pride in the young officer. "Sir, Environments have selected a landing site and await your approval."

The General indicated the map on the table before him. "Show me."

Jinkwa extended his front left foot and pointed out a flat area shaded yellow. "Here, a desert, sir. From this position we can sweep westwards towards the large sites of infestation," he tapped the far side of the map, "here."

"Well done, First Pilot," said Fakrid. "Return to Environments and give my full approval."

"Yes sir," Jinkwa nodded and went out.

General Fakrid sighed and licked his leathery lips. He punched up forward vision on the scanner before him. The planet Vaagon could just be seen, peeping into view among the stars, green and lovely. Cleansed of human parasites, it would make a perfect addition to the ever expanding Chelonian Empire.

The TARDIS span through the space/time vortex, the light on its rooftop flashing nonsensically. Extra-dimensional beings observed its passing without surprise. Off he goes again, they thought, to put more wrongs to rights.

In the control room, one panel of the central console blanked out for a second, the instrumentation replaced by flat white nothing. It returned suddenly. Neither of the TARDIS' passengers had noticed. They were sat cross legged on spread out sheets of newspaper, polishing furiously at their footwear. The Doctor had formed a line



of identical correspondent shoes around the console and was busy scrubbing at yet another.

Suddenly Bernice threw the boots she was cleaning over her shoulders. "I'm bored."

The Doctor looked up. "Oh," he said guiltily. "Well, we could always play scrabble."

"Is there any point?" Bernice gritted her teeth. The last game had ended acrimoniously in a dispute over the authenticity of some of the Doctor's words. Dynatrope, indeed. "Let's do something wild, outrageous and daring."

The Doctor leapt up and began to fiddle at the co-ordinate input panel. "How about meeting the three-eyed toad people of Miradilus 4?"

"Well, I don't know, what are they like?"

The Doctor grunted. "Much as the name suggests. Not very imaginative, Earth naturalists."

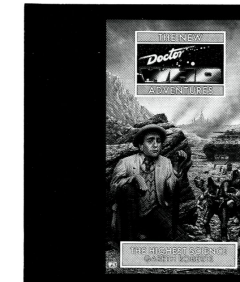
Bernice gathered her boots together and made for the inner door. "Call me when we get there."

The Doctor returned his attentions to the console. Irritatingly, the navigation was showing signs of dephasing. He thought he'd fixed that problem long ago. An alarm was sounding on the other side of the console. He whipped round and snorted. A readout read *Danger: Reverse Fortean Flux*. Absurd. It was elementary Time theory, there was no such thing as a reverse Fortean flux. It would be interesting to find one, though...

He kicked a sheet of newspaper absently. The headline read **SHREWSBURY SHOWERED BY SARDINES**.

Gareth Roberts

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The Highest Science.*
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Prelude

THE PIT

The major looked at the body. It had been found floating in a pit on the outskirts of the Nicaean capital. Dirt farmers had seen the bundle of rags and pulled it out of the watery grave. It had been floating face-up, but was no longer recognisably human. Major Carlson estimated that it had been there for over forty-eight hours.

It was the body of a young teenage boy. The head had been caved in and teeth were missing. Efforts had been made to disguise the identity of the child; the body had been burnt, almost beyond recognition, by a staser.

How the boy survived so far was a miracle.

The medics were treating the injuries,

to try and keep the boy alive until they reached the hospital. One of the medics shook his head. There was no chance.

"Can I talk to him?" Carlson asked. The medic shrugged.

Carlson knelt down and looked at the boy's arm; he could see needle marks. Carlson had seen a number of these bodies dumped out in the desert. Victims of the drug gangs. Some were hostages, held for money; others: warnings to relatives to pay up or face the consequences.

The drug addicts were immoral. Once hooked into their nightmare world they would carry out any act, in order to obtain their fix. One of the most common crimes was "rootin", the senseless and arbitrary attacks on people walking along the street, with clubs, knives and stasers, for a few dollars. Burglaries, committed whilst high on drugs, often led to bizarre and violent behaviour.

This was the first time the Justice Police had found the victim still alive.

"What is your name?" the major asked. He could hear the slight inhalation of breath and a groaning sound, apparently from deep inside the child. He leant over the mouth, pressing his ear towards the burnt lips. "What is your name?"

He could hear a whispery sound. The boy was struggling to talk. "I am..."

"Yes, I can hear you. You are all right now. You are safe..."

The boy started to chuckle. And then a deep, distinctive gasp. "I am... Legion."

The major felt the last breath. The boy was dead.

The day was stretching on. Carlson had said that he would try and be home on time but he knew his wife wouldn't understand. She worried about him. He sat at his desk, looking at the photographs of the dead body. He used the vidphone and told her that he would be late. She was irritated, as usual.

He picked up the pathologist's report. In the previous ninety-six hours the boy had taken, or been injected with, a cocktail of hallucinogenic drugs. The body also contained small trace elements of an unidentified drug. There were needle marks all over his body. He had been an user.

But Carlson was nowhere closer to finding out the identity of the boy. There were a few missing person reports. A



nineteen year-old student, from the agricultural college. But no younger teenage boys.

Carlson wouldn't spend too long on the investigation. After a month, if they hadn't progressed any further, the body would be given a simple burial and the file closed. There was too much crime, and too little resources, to warrant the case remaining open. He had become used to the senseless cruelty and evil. Even if the victim had been a child...

The burnt carcasses hung from the street lighting. There were two bodies tied together. They had been doused in an inflammable chemical and then set alight. Both were well known drug dealers. The Justice Police had arrested them four times before. Each time, they only carried rotweed. Now they had obviously irritated someone.

Carlson was not involved in drug investigations although most of the street crime on Nicaea was drug related.

"It's getting hotter," said a police officer. The major nodded. The level of violence and incidence of crime seemed to be rising. Perhaps it was the beginning of the civil war.

Carlson looked down the empty street. Only two kilometres from the shopping centre was the Riotsville area of the capital. He thought the murders were a warning, but to whom and about what? The people were more interested in the conflict across the Seven Planets.

The Nicaean Declaration of Independence was leading to more unrest...

He had informed his commander, General Kopyon, about his current workload. There had been eleven rapes, and seven murders, in the last three months. This was actually an improvement on the previous quarter. But what played on his mind were the last words of the teenage boy. "I am Legion". He thought that this might be one of the drug gangs which saw parts of Riotsville as its own territory. But there was no record of any such gang.

Several days after the body was found, Manuel Beart was reported missing. His stepfather, a nervous, irritable man of Hispanic origin, walked into the Justice Police Headquarters and told a story about his family argument and the fourteen year-old running away.

Carlson was handed the report. It was over two weeks since the teenager had gone missing. Why had they waited so long to report his absence? The hologram of Manuel bore an uncanny resemblance to the dead body, but before the family were shown the photos of the corpse, the major wanted to ask them some more questions.

The home was unnaturally quiet. Everything was in its place. They were believers. The book was prominently displayed. The mother sat opposite him, crying. The stepfather explained about how worried they were for Manuel. There was something missing about the scene. Even with the inexplicable time gap, there was something missing...

And then Carlson noticed. The photos on display had three smiling faces. The mother, stepfather and a nine year-old girl. There were no photos of a boy.

"Is this your daughter?" Carlson asked.

The room went quiet. He asked to see her.

"She is not here." As the stepfather talked about his own beautiful daughter, the mother began to wail.

Carlson asked to see around the house. He wanted to see the boy and girl's room.

"Please, no," said the mother.

Inside the boy's bedroom was a mattress. Electronic bolts locked the door and window. The girl's room was well kept, but looked as if it had been ransacked. There was a deep red stain on the floor.

"Where is she? I need to see her," said the major.

"Tell him, tell him," cried the mother.

"She is in hospital," the stepfather said quietly.

"What happened?"

"The boy..." the mother began.

"He is not a child. He is evil." The stepfather began to pray.

"We tried to keep him safe, from himself," the mother said. "He tried to steal from us, from his friends."

"This is how he repaid us."

The major listened. The boy had threatened his parents. He said that unless they gave him money, he would hurt his sister. He said that they cared for his sister more than him. They had heard many words of abuse before. He had attacked them before. But this time they had returned home and found that he



had injected their daughter with his drugs. She was hallucinating, screaming in torment.

The stepfather had attacked him. He had screamed at him, that he was evil, that he would be punished. The boy's death had been an accident. So they said. The major didn't know.

The family hadn't found any peace. The daughter was insane. The doctors had said that she was unlikely ever to escape from her pain.

Carlson had interviewed the stepfather. He talked about divine retribution and about Judgement Day. He said things would be different, soon...

Neil Penswick

*Doctor Who -
The New Adventures:
The Pit.*

Written by
Neil Penswick,
with a cover by
Peter Elson.

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Prelude

DECEIT

From *Break-out to Empire: Essays on the Third Millennium*
 Edited and published by Federation
 Archivist Ven Kalik

Extract from the editor's Introduction:
 It is a commonly-held misconception that the Break-out – that explosive mass migration of humankind across interstellar space that began in the closing years of the twenty-first century – was the result of intolerable conditions within the solar system.

Various causes of widespread dissatisfaction have been suggested. The necessity of avoiding cognitive dissonance ensured that each and every colony developed a tradition that, however harsh the conditions on the newly settled planet, things had been worse on Earth. By the time a hundred

new worlds had been explored, there were a hundred different myths about the appalling situation from which the colonists had escaped. These myths have become accepted as truths, and have been reiterated in academic works published not only by human historians but also by Draconians and Arcturans. Scholars have entered into heated debates: was the principal cause of the migration overpopulation? Or environmental degradation? Or alien invasion?

None of these theories is supported by the facts.

Although it is true that Earth was supporting a population that seems barely credible by contemporary standards, the worst of the overcrowding was over. Earth's population had been in decline since the early twenty-first century, thanks to a combination of plagues, birth control measures, and – most importantly – the development of instant transport systems that allowed for the rapid colonisation of the other planets and moons in the solar system.

Although it is true that Earth's oceans and atmosphere were badly polluted, the situation had stabilised by the middle of the twenty-first cen-

tury, and thereafter most pollution indicators showed a gradual improvement.

It is true that, even at this early stage, humankind had been menaced by hostile alien beings. But retrospect tends to telescope history, so that the popular view of pre-Break-out Earth is a planet permanently besieged. In fact, at the time of the Break-out, humankind was at peace with its neighbours: the threats from the Cybermen, and then from the former Martians, were past; and the near-destruction of human life on Earth in the early stages of the First Dalek War was still almost a century in the future.

If not overcrowding, pollution, or war, what was the impulse that drove millions of people to abandon their home? Warp ship technology was almost untried; the ship's owners, Earth-based corporations whose wealth and power were already beyond the control of governments, demanded extortionate payment for every outbound berth. Why would anyone expend his life savings to leave a solar system that had, apparently, already seen its darkest days?

The answer, I suggest, lies in the perception of poverty. Wealth differentials were vast and, more importantly, they had never been so visible. Mass communications enveloped the solar system; transportation was almost instant. The majority of the population on every inhabited planet lived in relative poverty, depending on state benefits, short-term menial employment, and the proceeds of crime. Yet even the poorest could afford the radio and video links that provided a non-stop display of flaunted wealth and glamour; even the poorest could afford the Trans-Mat fare to the retail palaces in the floating domes of Venus or to the marble halls of the government offices on Earth.

For the majority of humans, the solar system at the end of the twenty-first century was a taunting prison. A trip to the stars, however costly and risky, would have seemed an escape.

I wish I had a recorder. Would I remember how to use it, anyway? We left so much behind.

Anything would be easier than this. Burnt slivers of wood and strips of old sheets. The children came in to see me this morning. Asked me what I was doing. Thought I'd gone mad. They'd never seen writing, of course. Almost forgotten it myself. Don't know why I'm bothering, except that the androids reacted so strangely.

I thought they'd stop me, I suppose. Take away my carbon and my sheet, destroy it all. On the contrary; they

stood at the end of the bed, turned their blank faces to each other like a pair of gateposts, and had one of their silent conversations. Turning back, they said in unison that my sheet of writing would be preserved in the colony's archives. Could I have a pen, I asked. And paper? They considered, whirring quietly. No; the Corporation's rules did not allow the provision of implements for writing.

Typical.

I can't have much time left. Hours, perhaps. The pain isn't getting worse, but I've convinced myself I can feel the cancer growing inside me.

Don't feel sorry for me, though! I really can't complain. They say I'm the oldest surviving colonist now – have been for several years. The only man on the planet who wasn't born here.

But I was always tough. You had to be, living in the Stop. Hard to remember those days. I must have been strong, though. Sold litres of blood. Sold a kidney and half my optic nerves. Bought and sold bad zap in the tunnels. Survived. All to raise the cash to buy a berth on a warp ship. Everyone in Aryan Heights wanted out. Not just poor, but poor Europeans. The bottom of the heap. We didn't care where we went, mostly. I ended up here.

Arcadia.

And it really is. Land of milk and honey. Couldn't believe my eyes when I stepped out of the airlock. The mountains, the sweet air, the clean rain.

It's got better since then, too. It was rugged and wild, but we tamed it. Well, the Corporation tamed it. Weather control, terraforming. The androids did the hard work, right back in the beginning. I didn't think a Corporation would be that generous. Still can't work out what the Corporation thought it would get out of this colony. They leave us in peace now, though. Just a few androids left. I can't make the kids understand that they're just machines!

Perfect climate, now. We built solid towns too, although it'll be difficult to build any more now that the rules forbid power tools. But it's very quiet. Peaceful. And there haven't been any more settlers, of course, so we have everything we want.

And as I'm getting near the end it doesn't matter now if I confess. I switched documents, in the warp ship. According to my ID chip, I was going to become a baker. Tradesman. No surname. So I switched with another guy. And now I'm Head of the House of Delahaye. On the Council. Hereditary advisor to that street-sweetie who became the local Princess. Her son came to see me yesterday. Twelve years-old, and a Prince. He had robes and everything. Wearing a crown! These youngsters take it all so seriously.

Like the Corporation promised, we're living in the way that our ancestors did. No, better than that, because we have enough food and land and everything we could want.

Just one fly in the ointment.

It seems ungrateful to complain.

After all, I've outlasted everyone who shipped in with me. Ginny went five



years ago – just after Edwin was born. Another one of the Corporation's rules, those daft names. Supposed to make us feel in tune with the lifestyle here.

But I'd have liked to see the children growing up. Richard will take over as head of the Delahayes, and he's barely thirteen years-old.

As I say, I can't complain. At thirty-eight, I've lived longer than most on Arcadia. Unforeseen side-effect of warp travel, the androids say. All colonists die young. Tough luck for us, but worse for those left behind. Our ship was among the last to leave Earth. Colonisation programme halted indefinitely. No escape from the Stop now, at any price.

But the kids won't listen when I try to tell them what things were like back home. The Corporation have left us the androids, but they refuse to provide data about anything except Arcadia.

There's something suspicious about the whole set-up. The androids say that the Corporation have abandoned the

space station. The kids call it the moon now, because they've picked up somewhere that a planet has to have a moon. But I know that silvery glint in the sky is a space station. And I think it's still watching us.

But what can I do? And why should I care? I'll be gone soon. The last of the non-natives. Our children have taken over, and they do what the androids tell them, mainly. The androids have taken to calling themselves Counsellors. Very fancy.

There'll be Delahayes on Arcadia for hundreds of years, I guess. Generation after generation. Before long, Earth and the solar system – everything except Arcadia – will have been forgotten here. Not even an old wives' tale. Just forgotten.

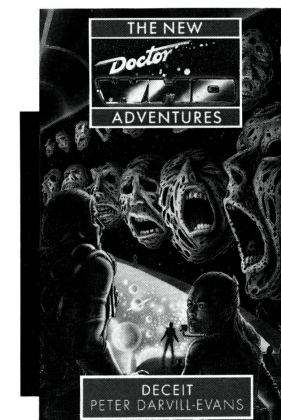
It could go on for hundreds of years. Thousands. Unless the Corporation decide to close the colony down.

I can't make the children understand about the power of the Corporation.

Or unless someone comes here by accident.

But what kind of ship – what kind of traveller would arrive on Arcadia by accident?

Peter Darvill-Evans



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 Peter Darvill-Evans
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Prelude

Lucifer Rising

As Miles Engado lifted his daughter from the aircab, the pilot was irritatedly gazing out across the scarred headland to the greasy black ocean beyond. "Jeez mister, hurry it up with the cash, willya? The rain's beginnin' to blister my paintwork," he scowled. "What the hell you wanna come here for anyway?"

"My father was born here," Miles said quietly. "Ozette was a beautiful place then. There were trees. And seals in the bay. Will you wait for us please?"

The cab pilot favoured him with a scornful glance. "Oh great: my one fare today and its gotta be an eco-obsessive." His voice raised angrily above the wind as Miles took his daughter by the hand and turned away. "You're crazy man, this place is *dangerous*! You got no business bringing a child here! No *business*!"

Unable to formulate a reply, Miles perched wearily upon a poisoned stump of cedar and watched as the cab

rose steeply to hover above the bay. The driver's voice echoed bitterly.

"Some of us would love to be able to afford a licence for children! When are you people *ever* gonna learn some *responsibility*!"

Miles smiled sadly. He didn't blame the cab pilot for his bigotry: the man was too much a product of his society ever to realise that there were better ways to live. His thoughts turned to his daughter, leaping in a hopscotch pattern towards the edge of the chemical streaked promontory.

"Paula! Don't go to close to the edge," he shouted in sudden concern.

"Come off it, Dad. I *am* eight!"

"You might have an accident!"

She glanced over scornfully. "I'm not stupid, Dad. I might kill myself if I fall over there."

He couldn't help but smile at her childish pomposity. "It's not the fall that kills you," he said. "It's the sudden stop when you hit the ground!"

She laughed suddenly, innocently, and turned to gaze with narrowed eyes across the greasy black liquid that rolled from the Olympic Peninsula Bay towards the Pacific Ocean beyond.

Miles followed her gaze. Two hundred metres below them on the steaming beach lay the rotting shreds of a village. The village had existed since the fifteenth century and until two years ago had been preserved as a national enclave, before being abandoned because of chemical spillage from a vast factory complex further along the northwest coast of British Columbia.

Abandoned by all except one.

"Have we come to see Gramps?"

Miles swept the girl into his arms and hoisted her above his head. "Why do little girls ask such awkward questions, hmm?"

Paula giggled. "Why do grown-ups always say that when they haven't got an answer?"

"Hah!" Miles swung the child around his head before setting her gently back down onto the ground. "Game set and match to Paula Engado, I think!"

The child pointed down at the chocolate scar of the beach and jumped up and down with excitement. "Look at all the huts! Which one is his? Can we go down to the beach, Dad, please?"

"No, love."

Her face fell. "Because of the bad stuff?" She frowned. "The *poisons*?"

Miles nodded. He stared down at his father's scraggy hut and the grave beside it, and hot tears welled in his eyes. He thought of the father he'd been known as a boy; the stories he'd been told of men who'd spent long nights praying in a secret pools, deep in the nearby forest; who'd carved canoes from small trees and whose wives had selected the best shells and flints to tip the spears; who'd killed seals to make floats and who'd hunted only the most willing of the migrating whales.

Dad.

"Are you crying because of Gramps?"

He crouched down beside Paula, bringing himself eye to eye with the child and resting one hand on her skinny shoulder. He wondered if she would understand if he told her he was crying for so much more than just his father. He wiped his eyes, self-consciously. He unsealed a carrybelt and pulled out a selection of items. Four sticks of charcoal. A pouch of tobacco. A small clay bowl. With the charcoal he began to draw lines on the scarred rock overlooking the beach, talking softly as he did so.

"Now I've told you what's going to happen on the Earth soon, haven't I?"

"Sure, Dad, you do *all* the time. The bad stuff, the *poison* I mean, that's

gonna be everywhere soon. Then we'll all be like Gramps was."

- bones softening, face gone; rich, dark skin bleached by chemical poisons, rotting right there on the toxic sand and because of his ridiculous pride and stubborn refusal to face the future -

"Unless we do something about it, yes." He put aside the charcoal when four lines were complete. He opened the pouch and began to sprinkle tobacco into small piles between the lines, shielding the dry powder from the wind with his body.

"Whatcha gonna do with Gramps's bowl?"

"Something your mother would never approve of."

"Huh?"

"It's a traditional ceremony."

"I don't understand."

Miles looked up at his daughter as he folded the empty tobacco pouch back into his carrybelt. "I'm not sure that I do either. Stealing addictive substances and crawling about with bits of charcoal is hardly the act of a rational man." He straightened and handed the bowl to Paula. "Would you like to break it?"

Paula turned the bowl over in her tiny hands, studying it before returning her father's gaze steadily. The wind whipped her hair across her serious face, her eyes like chips of blue sapphire set in her dark skin. "It's like my bowl isn't it? The one you made for me when I was born?"

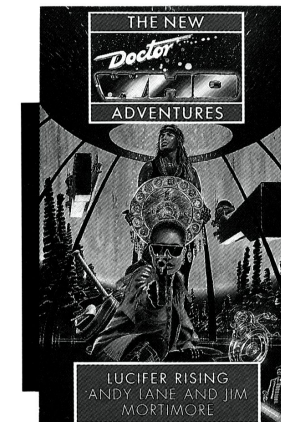
"Yes, it is. And now we have to break it."

"So Gramps' spirit can find peace."

"That's right."



phil 93



way away, to another planet, on a spaceship, to find a new way to help the Earth get better."

"Mum won't like going away, will she?"

Miles used one hand to rub his eyes. "No, love." He paused. "But Mum's not coming with us."

"Why not?"

"I can't explain right now. All I can tell you is that we're going to make a difference. Just you and me."

With his child in his arms, Miles Engado walked away from his father's tribal village, towards the grounded aircab and its impatiently gesturing pilot. Behind him the wind whipped the grains of tobacco, charcoal and clay over the edge of the cliff, where they fell into the glutinous black water and were instantly swallowed up.

"We're going to make a big difference."

Jim Mortimore and Andy Lane

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Jim Mortimore..
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Prelude

White Darkness

Hooded eyes glinting in the darkness, Paul Richmann sat on a weathered boulder overlooking the city below. His thumb blindly traced tiny circles over smoothed metal, like a silent litany, feeling the faint impress of engraved initials on the back of the casing. The lights of the city flickered and danced like the worshippers at temples, electric light not yet having reached Port-au-Prince.

Though he looked out over the city on a balmy night, Richmann's eyes did not see the dancing flames.

They didn't see the sparkling stars that fell from the heavens into the inky night-time waters of the Caribbean.

They saw...

The building was an ancient red brick tenement, with mould staining the walls. Red and green should never be seen, it was said, and the corners of Richmann's thin lips turned up slightly at the thought of old superstition. It was certainly the

landlord's unlucky day.

Iron railings sprouted from the tarmac in front of the building, and Richmann tapped a few of them experimentally on his way along to the door, recalling how a stick bounced from them when running past almost a quarter of a century ago. The thought was distracting, so he shoved it away into the darker recesses of his mind, returning his full attention to the door which he was approaching.

It was time-worn now, the paint peeling, the overhang fallen away from each step below. He had been told that it now creaked a bit, unless the edge was held near the top. Wrapping gloved fingers around the edge, he slowly opened it, and stepped into the dusty hallway, pulling the door closed. He stood for a moment, letting a faint thrill run through him as the musty scent of the hall brought long-dormant memories to mind.

His pulse quickened in anticipation as he heard a faint groaning of wood from above. He

glanced at the old clock on the wall, noting that it was five to twelve. He recalled that the old man always used to return at midday, and had discovered from discreet enquiries that this was still the case.

Glancing only briefly to either side, he jogged up the stairs as lightly as a cat.

The apartment was exactly as he remembered it, from the tatty curtains, to the table propped up with a book, a stuffed armchair, sagging with age, was off to one side, back to the door. Richmann scowled, not liking the idea of having his back to a door, but nevertheless settled into the chair.

With quick, silent movements, he slid a charger in the breach of a large automatic pistol, a Steyr 1912, and clipped a magazine into the butt. The gun sitting heavy and cold in his hand he sat back, ears listening carefully for any sound from outside.

It was several minutes before he heard it - the door below creaking open then shut.

Wearied footfalls on the stairs.

The door behind slipping open.

A grizzled, yet still quite large figure, passed by to his left, and stumped off towards the other room. A few vague shuffling noises came through the open door, and then the figure returned, this time without its coat.

The old man stopped in astonishment, as he saw Richmann sitting comfortably in the armchair. "Is that you, Paul?" he asked incredulously.

Richmann nodded wordlessly, and levelled the gun at the old man's chest.

"It's so good to see you! Ever since you... had your falling-out with those men and left, your mother and I..."

"I heard she died," Richmann stated softly.

"Yes, yes," the old man nodded nervously. His face reflected grief, but the tone of his voice hinted at something darker. "Her legs were no longer what they were; she fell..."

"So I heard. I received a letter from her recently, you know. Do you want me to read it to you? I have it here."

"I... don't think that'll be necessary."

"I thought not. I still have the scars, of course, but I presume you won't need to see them either?"

"No." The old man's voice was very quiet.

"Good," Richmann smiled wanly. "I haven't got all day."

If the other residents heard the sharp retorts, they either were wise enough to pay no attention, or idly put it down to the gleaming automobile - still something of a rarity even in Philadelphia - that squatted outside.

In a few moments, Richmann emerged from the red brick building, and got into the back seat of the car, which drove off.

"You saw him?" asked the man who sat next to Richmann.

"Wilhelm? For the last time, General, and just long enough to collect what was left to me." Richmann held a small pocket watch up by its chain. "Why did you come?"

"I've been curious about you since we met in Africa."



"And are you satisfied?"

"Not really."

"Good," Richmann looked out at the city as it passed them by. "I'd forgotten how cold it can get here."

"No matter; we'll be in warmer climes soon enough."

The slim white trails of jet aircraft now crossed the sky in place of falling stars, but the country was much the same. Apparently unaffected by the heat, a tall man strode through the gently waving sisal, his eyes glued to the dial on a little boxon his hand. "Haven't the Americans got their own people to find bits of rockets?" he called.

"Quite a lot of them," came the measured answer from the nearby road side, "but none with your... qualifications, Doctor."

"I suppose not," the Doctor muttered irritably, glancing back to where sunlight gleamed from the shoulder pips of a mustachioed man leaning against a jeep. "I warned you this would not do anything except delay my repairs to the TARDIS."

"Oh come on, don't tell me you still think you'll get that old Police Box working?"

"Of course I -" He broke off as the needle quivered on the dial. "Just a minute, Brigadier, I think I've found something." He knelt down,

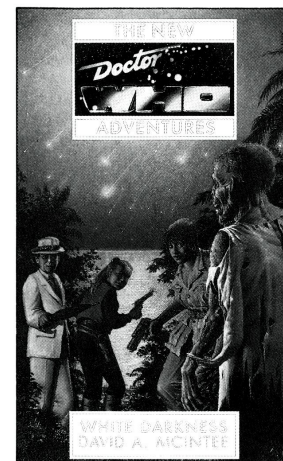
bending some of the sisal out of the way, to reveal a dull gleam set into the earth.

As the Brigadier jogged over, the Doctor dug out the piece of metal with a Swiss Army knife. "Any luck, Doctor?"

The Doctor examined the piece of metal, noting the faintness of the engraved letters 'W.R.' on the back. He flipped open the lid, weighing it thoughtfully in his hand as he stared at the still hands coated with dust. "No," he said, reburying it after a moment's thought. "We'd best keep looking."

David A McIntee

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Prelude

SHADOWMIND

Garyl Manten gathered up his kit bag and took one last look around the small service apartment, checking that he had packed everything. Satisfied that all was as it should be, he touched a control on the monitor terminal and said: "Activate vacant maintenance

lit city from the landing window. Over the skyline the brighter stars twinkled invitingly in the clear air. It was nearly midnight, but he did not mind the lateness of the hour. Night seemed an appropriate time to set out, considering his destination... besides, the travel tubes would be less busy.

As he stepped off the second floor landing, all the stair well lights blinked out at once, plunging him into semi-darkness.

He teetered at the top of the flight, snatching at the hand rail, fighting for balance... and an immaterial force seemed to press at his back, thrusting him out into the gloomy void over the stairs which rushed up to meet him with unreasonable speed...

Recovering in hospital the next day, the doctor responded to Garyl's protests with professional intransigence. He was sorry that he would miss the ship's proving flight, but did he not realise what a serious fall he had taken? True, the broken bones were easily repaired, but there was some spinal damage that would need regeneration. With luck, Garyl might be up in time to welcome his ship back...

He was restless that night, knowing the *Broadsword* would depart without him. He cursed the faulty lighting circuit that had failed him and the service engineers who could find no reason for the failure... When he finally managed to sleep he was troubled by a recurring image: a dark figure wearing night-sight goggles and carrying... a force projector? Could his subconscious hold a memory that the trauma of accident had wiped from his conscious mind? Perhaps it had *not* been an accident...? No. The idea was ridiculous. He was just trying to shift the blame from chance and his own clumsiness. He hadn't actually been assaulted or robbed. Besides, what good did putting him in hospital do anybody?

"Weapons Tec First Class, Toni Pandril, reporting for duty." She handed over her transfer documents to the boarding officer and waited patiently while he made an ID scan.

"I'll just take a moment to check these through Lieutenant," he said, starting to tap away at the lectern terminal that symbolically guarded the mouth of the boarding tube. Toni walked a few steps away and dropped her kit bag in front of the observation window.

Against the slowly drifting background of stars the *Broadsword* hung like a great sable egg, speared by the skystation's docking arms. Toni cast a professional eye over the rings of blister pods that broke the smooth lines of the warship's skin, encircling its tail and mid-section and clustering thick about its nose. Force field nodes, missile tubes, energy projectors. Her domain.

Two of the ship's flight bay hatches were open, shielded by glowing air-curtains. As she watched, a flight of shuttles glided up to one of the hatches.

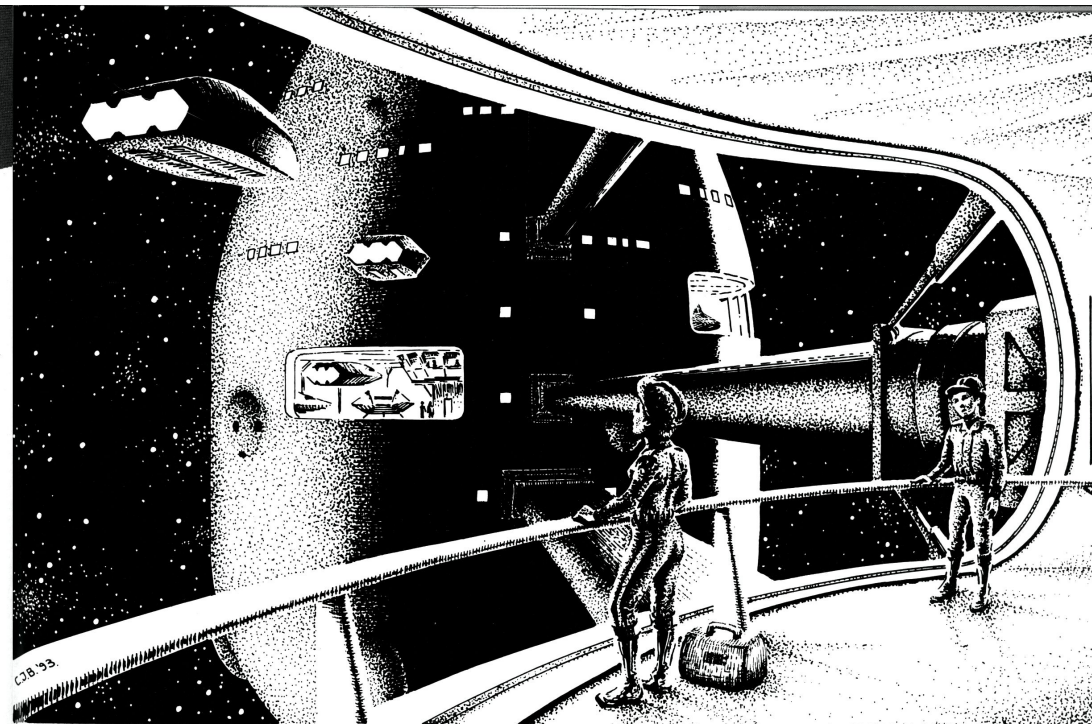
For a moment Toni seemed to lose herself in the scene before her. She blinked, then realised there was someone sharing the view. Turning slightly she saw it was a man of compact build with a dark, thoughtful face and thick black curly hair. His uniform insignia were those of a *Broadsword* flight lieutenant.

Toni said quietly: "Quite a sight, isn't it." The man smiled gently.

"Do you mean the general notion of a starship preparing to head out into the big night for the final frontier, or the *Broadsword* in particular?" he replied.

She grinned back at him. "Both, probably. Either way, it's still something."

He held out his hand. "Nicholas Cort," he



introduced himself, looking at her uniform insignia. "And you're the replacement for Manten, I suspect."

"That's right. My lucky break I guess..." she drew in her breath sharply "... sorry - no pun intended. Is he a friend of yours?"

"Not specially - we're all still getting to know each other. High proportion of first-timers on board. I believe Fleetcom think a new class of ship needs a fresh crew... or at least, one not too set in their ways."

Toni chuckled. "Keep going on like that and I'll feel like a grizzled space veteran."

"Oh - I see. What have you done?"

"A tour on *Adamant*."

"I would have thought that would have been enough to keep you busy. Who put in for the transfer? ... sorry - I'm prying."

"Nothing to hide. The *Adamant*'s a fine ship and I was happy to serve on her, but when I heard about the *Broadsword* I..." For a moment she hesitated, suddenly unsure of her motivation which seemed so strong but but oddly unfounded. Yet she seemed to remember Captain Farrack agreeing with her reasons when he approved her request... Then her doubt was gone and she smiled and smoothly continued: "... thought it was a chance to work on a wider range of weapons systems than on the *Adamant*."

"That I think we can promise you," said Cort positively.

"You're cleared to go through now, Lieutenant Pandril," said the boarding officer. He handed her a ship's pass and ident badge then saluted formally. "Welcome aboard."

Cort walked beside Toni as she made her way along the tube.

"Look," he said slowly, with what Toni thought was a hint of shyness, "I'd be happy to

show you round later... if you like..."

She thought his reserve rather appealing. "Thanks - I'll take you up on that. But I think I'd better report to Commander Foss first, don't you?"

He smiled brightly. "Sure - Admin's on deck two, they'll know where he is and sort out your accommodation..." They passed through the

hatchway into the *Broadsword* and he led the way to the central access core. "Oh, yes..." Cort chuckled. "I'd better warn you about Doc Yeoland. She wants the *Broadsword* to have the fittest crew in the fleet. Now, her medicals..."

"That's all right..." Pandril interjected quickly. "Our doctor on the *Adamant* gave me a full checkup before I left - it's on my file." Her expression was set hard. Then she relaxed, smiling, seeming a little surprised by her own reaction.

"Well... lucky you," replied Cort, with puzzled eyes.

They rode the lift tube in silence for a moment, then Toni started asking him about the rest of the senior officers, and the memory of her sharp response soon faded.

Ten days later he would recall the incident and understand.

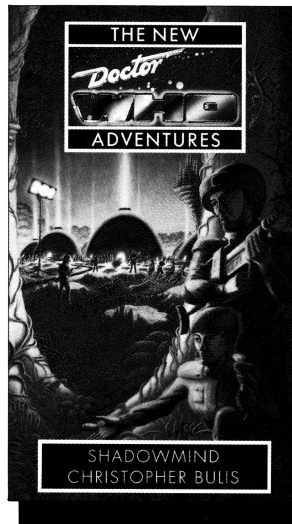
Too late, of course.

Christopher J. Bulis

**Doctor Who -
The New Adventures:
Shadowmind**

**Written by
Christopher Bulis
with a cover by
Christopher Bulis.**

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Prelude

Birthright

The Great Rift Valley, March 1926

The Doctor stretched out his arms expansively, as if to encompass the entire African continent, and gazed down at the vast savannahs of Ngorogoro. The air hung heavy with the smell of the thorn trees and of sun-baked soil. Down below him, in the greatest natural crater known to mankind, thousands upon thousands of lion and gazelle, buffalo and zebra were born, lived and died without ever knowing the world outside, the world of men and war, of love and hate, of treachery and deception.

It was going to be a long time before they were all extinct, the Doctor thought sadly, remembering all too clearly when he witnessed the very last lion on Earth being shot dead on this very spot.

Ace was singularly unimpressed. She'd joined the Professor to see the Universe, not prat

around in some arid wilderness in the middle of the Great Rift Valley. If his idea of fun was being an extra in a David Attenborough programme then he could forget it.

"This is an enchanted place, Ace," said the Doctor. "The cradle of humankind – the place where the first *homo sapiens* lifted her eyes heavenwards and wondered, 'I've been coming here for a long time now; the hills and the mountains are like old friends.' He gestured towards the mountains, purple and blue in the distance, 'Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa,' he said, indicating the snow-capped peak, 'And Mount Meru. And Mount Kukuruk...'

"Wrong!" gloated Ace, and pointed to the Baadeker (2002 edition) that she'd insisted on borrowing from the TARDIS's library.

The Doctor sulked. "Well, perhaps not now – but it will be... A friend of mine will live there one day..."

Ace looked curiously at the Time Lord. Every day she was learning to trust him more and more, but even now there was something undeniably spooky about a man who could travel into both the past and the future. How much did he know about what was going to happen? How much did he know about the future? The future of the Earth? Charlton Athletic's chances in the Cup? Her own personal future?

She was about to ask him when she spotted a tall aristocratic figure in the distance, standing, stork-like on one leg on the plain. He'd been there for a long, long time, so much a part of the African landscape that Ace hadn't noticed him until now. He turned slowly and slowly looked up to them, and waved.

The Doctor waved back and took Ace by the hand, leading her to the figure whose simple red shuka, or toga, belied his status as chief of the Maasai race of Eastern Africa.

"Greetings, Doctor," he said, in his native tongue. "It has been a long time."

"Greetings, Naikosai," the Doctor said in the Maai tongue, and then reverted to English for Ace's benefit. "Might I introduce my companion, Ace?"

"Greetings, Ace," said Naikosai in almost perfect English. "The Doctor here has spoken of you often. It is good that I finally meet you."

Ace looked challengingly at the Doctor as if to say: *And what have you been saying about me this time?*

"Naikosai, I have an urgent task elsewhere," the Doctor said guiltily. "Would you look after Ace for a few hours?"

This was the first Ace had heard of it. "Hey, if you're going off somewhere interesting then I'm coming too!"

"Not this time, Ace," the Doctor said cryptically. "This is something I have to do on my own... Naikosai is an old friend of mine, he'll take good care of you..."

Ace started to protest but the Doctor was already making his way back to the TARDIS.

39 Dean Street, Soho, London 1909

The white-haired old lady crushed the crepe de Chine dress to her lined and tired face, smelling its luxury, and smiled. It reminded her of the summers of her youth, when her parents would take her and her brother, Edward, over to Paris, on their way to the South of France.

"Doctor, they're beautiful," she said, and indicated the chic dresses which were spread out all over the bed. "But who are they for?"

"A young friend of mine," he said.

Margaret regarded her old friend with a knowing twinkle in her eyes. "It's about time," she chided fondly. "A man such as you should not be alone. You spend far too much time by yourself as it is... It's not healthy."

The Doctor coloured, and touched the Aztec brooch which he had taken to wearing on the lapel of his jacket as if it were a talisman. "She's just a friend, Margaret," he said hurriedly. "Her name's Benny."

Margaret tut-tutted. "Benny!" And what sort of name is that for a young woman?"

"She's a... foreigner," explained the Doctor. She'll be arriving shortly. Do you mind if she has the spare room, Margaret?"

The old lady smiled: she'd known the mysterious Scotsman for more than half her life, and yet he still treated her as if she were the mistress of this spacious apartment in the heart of London's Soho, when in fact it was he who owned the flat. And if someone had told Margaret that he also owned half of London she wouldn't have been at all surprised. He was a strange one, was Doctor Smith. Strange but also the kindest, most gentle man she had ever known.

"Any friend of yours is a friend of mine, you should know that by now," she said, and added: "After all, we've known each other for – what is it now?"

"Forty-two years," said the Doctor.

"That's right. And this is your home, after all," the kindly old woman reminded him. "I just look after it for you. Why, I'm little more than your housekeeper..."

"You're more to me than that, Margaret," the Doctor said, and pulled an elaborate watch chain from out of his waistcoat pocket. "I have to go now," he said guiltily. "I have an appointment at the bank..."

Margaret looked accusingly at him, making him feel uncomfortable: there was very little he could keep from this old lady.

"I wonder if you could pick up some books for me..." He handed her a grubby business card: *Jared Khan, Antiquarian Bookseller, 31/ Museum Street, Bloomsbury, London.*

"Of course," she said, and fixed him with a knowing eye: "And will you be back later for tea?"

"Soon," he lied. "But perhaps not for tea." Margaret nodded wisely: her old friend need say no more.

The Doctor opened the door, but before he left the apartment he paused, and, without turning around, he asked: "By the way, Margaret, what are your favourite flowers?"

Margaret frowned: it seemed a strange question from one who she normally never considered the sentimental type. "White lilies," she said. "But what makes you ask?"

"Just curious, my dear, dear friend, just curious," the Doctor said and brushed a tear from his eye, as he remembered the first time he had ever met Margaret.

And the day that she had died.

Coutts Bank, The Strand, London, February 1868

The horse-drawn hansom cab rumbled to a halt outside the exclusive Coutts bank in the Strand, London, in the thirty-first year of the reign of Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland and soon-to-be Empress of India. The Doctor leapt sprightly out of the cab, and offered his hand to the pretty young woman accompanying him, who lifted her long skirts to avoid the rubbish strewn in the gutter before the bank's imposing facade.

She looked around, breathing in once more the sights and sounds of the greatest city the planet had ever known. It was good to be home, she thought, even though it was only for a short while.

She looked curiously at the Doctor: he had changed his appearance and it was hard to reconcile the impish scuffily-dressed tramp with the more saturnine creature before her.

But no matter, he had brought her here in the

TARDIS, and beneath his external appearance she could still catch the essence of the man she had once loved and respected above all others, after her father. He had once talked of his family: it was only now that he had returned to her that she realised that she – and all the others who had ever travelled with him – were the only family he had ever known.

"You're glad to be back in your own time, Victoria?" the Doctor asked, in that curious Scottish burr of his.

Victoria Waterfield smiled nostalgically. "I miss it sometimes," she said. "But I'm happy in the twentieth century with my adoptive parents..."

"I'm pleased," said the Doctor and surprised himself by meaning it. "We are here for some very important business you know..."

Victoria sighed. "I know, there are papers to sign, letters to be sent, monies to be transferred..."

"Are you sure it won't upset you?" The Doctor's concern was genuine.

"Father is dead," said Victoria philosophically. "He died on Skaro, a victim of those horrible Skaro creatures..."

"We know that," said the Doctor. "The authorities think he died in a house-fire in Canterbury..."

"I'm his sole heir," Victoria continued. "And I can do with his money and his properties what I want..."

"It must be your own decision, Victoria," the Doctor said.

"I trust you, Doctor," Victoria stated categorically. "I'll do what you want me to do... And after that, Doctor..."

"Yes." "I'd like to see my aunt," she said. "It's so long that I last saw her. She's the closest family I have now... apart from you, that is."

"Of course you may see your aunt," said the Doctor, as he opened the door to the bank for her. "I've already told her that you would be visiting today. And if I know Margaret Waterfield, she's already put the kettle on!"

The Great Rift Valley, March 1926

"Well, you took your time getting back," grum-



bled Ace as the Doctor opened the doors of the TARDIS which had materialised just in front of the red mud-hut where Ace and Naikosai were waiting for him. The sun was sinking low over the horizon, and in the distance could be heard the sound of the African predators as they awoke from their day-time torpor to begin their nocturnal hunt.

"Was I away for long?" asked the Doctor.

"Hours."

"It feels like years to me," he admitted. "Has Naikosai taken good care of you?"

Ace looked affectionately at her new-found friend. "It was well wicked, Professor," she said. "He showed me lion and rhino and elephant and..."

"Just like *Out of Africa* then," he chuckled, and bade goodbye to the Maasai chief. He led Ace into the TARDIS and began to operate the dematerialisation circuits. "And was there anything else Naikosai showed you on your mini-safari?" he asked.

"Nah, not really," she said, and then frowned. "Apart from the termites, that is..."

"Termites?" asked the Doctor, trying to sound casual.

"Yeah, hundreds and thousands of termite nests," she said. "If I ever get back to Perivale and Miss Cricklesham's biology classes I'm going to be the world's expert." She glanced suspiciously at her friend. "Why do you ask?"

"Just curious, Ace, that's all," he lied, as the TARDIS vanished from Earth, en route for the colony world of Terra Alpha.

So, thought the Doctor, almost guiltily, the pieces are all in place – and the game can now begin...

Nigel Robinson

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Birthright**
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Nigel Robinson
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Peter Elson.
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Prejudice ICEBERG

Tobias Vaughn raised an eyebrow and smiled his unctuous smile. The photographer framed the shot.

"Groovy," she said, breathy still with nerves in the great man's presence. The shutter clicked. With a push of her thumb she wound the film on and clicked again. "Look out of the window," she commanded, hoping she sounded more confident than she felt.

A knowing grin, almost a leer, lifted the fleshy corners of his mouth. Suavely, he turned to the panoramic view his luxurious high-rise office gave onto: London, sprawling away into the haze of distance.

Isobel threw off her shoes and jumped up onto his deep-cushioned leather chair. Her feet sank into its opulent softness. He didn't seem to mind, and now she had a better angle on the view Tobias Vaughn was taking in. She steadied herself and peered through her SLR.

It was a clear blue day outside. Spring had come early this year. The morning sun was painting the detail of the city in yellow and white. Even the muddy Thames threw off a lazy

sparkle. And looking down on it all was a man who plainly regarded himself as the master of all he surveyed.

"Now, Miss Watkins," he purred. "You will put a good word in about me to your uncle. I have a list as long as your arm of top-class scientists who are wanting to work for me. But I'm interested in him – and his remarkable cerebral mentor."

Isobel made a non-committal sound. His absolute self-confidence disturbed her. She was glad she didn't work for him – though she knew her uncle was tempted. He was charming though, was Tobias Vaughn. Too charming. Nice as pie. But there was something else in him, something Machiavellian which repelled her. And though she had no hard evidence, her gut feeling was that he was deeply deranged: clinically megalomaniacal.

"Hang on a mo"

Leaping from the chair, she spiralled down in front of him and wedged herself along the spacious sill. Very David Hemmings. Very *Blow Up*. She was conscious that her mini-dress was

revealing rather more than it ought. Who gives a damn, she thought defiantly; these were the days of liberation. She was certain, anyway, that Tobias Vaughn was oblivious to her female charms. The vibes were otherwise: power-fiend, yes; but no way sex-fiend.

The great man turned his face to her, mildly distracted by her contortions. His voice was smooth as syrup and just as sickly.

"My, my," he oozed. "Every inch the true professional."

The smugness was overpowering. Male chauvinist pig! Still, he was helping to extend her photographic experience. It was just a sweetener, of course, a come-on to entice her uncle to work for him, but it was nevertheless quite a coup to be snapping away at the managing director of International Electrics – or whatever it called itself. Perhaps she could sell the prints to the papers and make a bomb.

She was sure she had a talent for it – photography – given the chance. Her days as a model were numbered, she knew. Though she was barely twenty she had to think ahead. She didn't want to be on the streets at thirty. That's why she had sunk her funds into buying the latest equipment: camera, developing kit, the works.

There was something on the great man's mind: he was looking through her, not at her, the eyebrow left high and dry amidst the swell of thoughts that clamoured for attention.

"To me," she prompted.

He focused on the upturned lens, his unctuous smile returning. She eased the button down. It was the shot she'd waited for. It caught the overweening spirit of the man precisely.

"Far out!" She swung her legs to the floor, slipping her shoes back on and smoothing down her dress. "That's fab, Mr Vaughn. Thanks for your time."

"My pleasure entirely." He extended a pudgy hand. "Might I examine your camera."

She passed it over: her latest, most expensive toy.

"Mm, primitive mechanism," she thought he murmured, as he scrutinised her pride and joy.

"Best that money can buy, Mr Vaughn," she put in, in case he had any doubt.

"I'm sure. At the moment, at least. Though I'm bound to tell you my scientists are working on an electronic camera. Years ahead of its time. I predict that International Electromatics will sweep its rivals from the field."

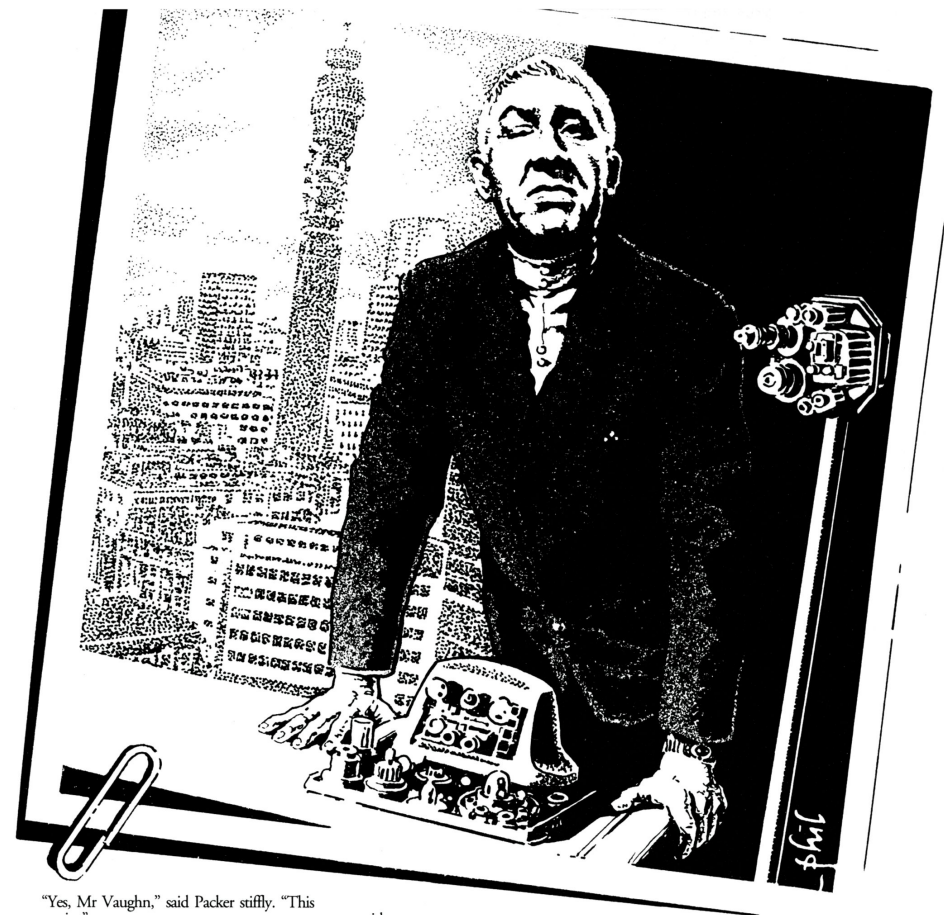
He held out the camera and she took it back, deflated, but damned if she was going to show it.

"Well, thanks again," she managed.

"Not at all. I'll get Packer to show you out." He pressed a button on his desk. "You'll send me the prints?" The honey-toned question was a barely-veiled demand. "My PR chappies are planning a poster campaign. *Uniformity*. *Duplication*. *IE. The secret of success*. Rather clever, don't you think? My face above the slogan. These shots of yours may be just the ticket."

There was a knock on the office door, which opened to reveal an anxious-looking man in black, hand-gun holstered across his chest.

"Ah, Packer. Escort Miss Watkins through computer clearance. Then return to me. We have, erm – a few details to discuss."



"Yes, Mr Vaughn," said Packer stiffly. "This way miss."

"Do remember me to your uncle," said Tobias Vaughn, exuding charm like slime, as Isobel moved towards the door. "He'd be happy working for us, I'm certain of it."

She managed a tight-lipped smile and a nod, before she left the room, shadowed by Packer.

The door closed, Tobias Vaughn eased himself into the softness of his chair. Not that he appreciated softness any longer. It was an irrelevance to him since his conversion, or rather, semi-conversion.

It was the subject of conversion that preoccupied him. Should he go all the way? Give up his mind to these extraterrestrials, as he had given up his body and made it hard and everlasting like his own? The answer, of course, was no. No, he should not give up his independence, his humanity, his individual, and very particular, strength of will. Strength of body was one thing; he exulted in his new-found physical prowess; it added to his sense of power. But lose his mind to them? Never! The problem was how to evade their designs on him. It was part of his agreement, signing away his soul.

He began to chuckle at the metaphysical melodrama of it all. He was no Faustus. He still had the ultimate sanction. Without his co-operation they would be nowhere. They could not even land their invasion craft on Earth. They depended on the radio beam that only he could

provide.

Uniformity. Duplication. That had been the secret of IE's success. And it was all based on the technology of these cyber creatures from another world. They were so advanced, and yet so gullible. It had been child's play to manipulate them all these years. They would do what he wanted them to do.

And what was that?

Well, they could make him Controller of the world. Yes, that would be amusing.

In any case, it was a start.

David Banks

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David Banks
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Prelude

BLOOD-HEAT

We tortured the mams for a couple of hours before killing them. You didn't need to *link* to feel their fear. They cried and touched each other at the end; actually cuddled up to each other, as if their closeness could protect them from us. It was disgusting. One of the males placed itself in front of the others. It gibbered at us, shaking its hairy fists and making those stupid noises with its vocal chords K'to thinks are primitive words. K'to is stupid. Everyone knows no life form with only a voice box will ever learn to communicate.

Laughing, we focused our contempt on them through the bars of the cage and burned out their minds.

When they were dead we levitated the carcasses and threw them far outside the city gates. It amused us to watch other animals fighting over their bodies. These days food is scarce outside the city when you're a stupid mam.

And fun is scarce inside the city when you're a Silurian Prince.

Night found me lying flat on the crystal roof of

the palace, gazing up at the sky. The *Stranger* was a few degrees north of the pole star, a cold blue light in the heavens, easily visible even if you didn't know where to look for it. Tonight it was bright, but tomorrow it would be brighter still, and the night after that, yet brighter, until...

There was a sound behind me. Father stepped onto the palace roof. He walked towards me, passed without *linking*, stopped at the edge of the roof to gaze out over the crystal spires of the now-deserted city, towards the forests beyond. He was quiet for a long time.

—Father?—

He linked without without turning. —You killed the mammals today. Morka!— It was not a question and I knew it. —The caged mammals which were to be taken into the shelters.—

—It wasn't just me. It was Kchtaal as well. He—

Father held up a hand, the webbing between his fingers trembling angrily. To my shame, he spoke without *linking*, as if I was still newly hatched. 'You know we must preserve a balanced ecology for the time when the *Stranger* has left our skies.'

'Father, they were just mams! Kchtaal and I were bored, we —'

'The mammals must be replaced. I will hunt for more tomorrow.'

I scrambled to my feet. 'But Father, that means you won't be coming into the shelter with me!'

'You may spend the rest of the night thinking about that. You may also consider whether your friendship with Kchtaal is... entirely appropriate.'

'But why can't Kchtaal's father —'

'There will be no argument! Kchtaal's father is responsible for sealing the shelters. Everyone else is already in hibernation. The mammals must be preserved, therefore I must hunt them.'

'But we don't need the mams, everyone knows that! You're the Leader! You don't need to obey the rules!'

Father's third eye began glimmering angrily. I felt a sharp pain in my limbs. 'If that is what you think then know this: a leader is more subject to the rules than are his people!'

'I don't understand, I —'

'Enough, Morka! He turned to leave, hesitated, quivering with anger. 'When you are summoned to the shelters you will obey. Do you understand?'

I said miserably, 'But I'm afraid of the cold...'

Father said nothing. He turned back to face me one final time. 'Good night Morka.'

Then he was gone. The warmth in his voice had done nothing to ameliorate the coldness in his mind. He was disappointed with me. Worse, he was embarrassed. I realised now he had considered me an adult and I realised how my immature action must have shamed him.

I gazed up at the *Stranger*, flung a bolt of mental energy at it, and was not surprised when all my rage had no effect on it whatsoever.

Resolving not to endure my shame alone I *linked* with Kchtaal.

I'd already made one mistake. The second was fatal.

The *Stranger* was a swollen glow in the sky, clearly visible through thin, scudding clouds. The swamps were flooding because of the higher tides. Far across the great plains volcanoes lit the underside of the clouds with a sulphurous light. This was the scene later that night as I urged my *dilophosaurus* into the near reaches of the western forest. Kchtaal was beside me, riding a *plateosaurus* only two years from the nest. Nets were fastened to both our saddles. We had no *herrerasaurus*; we wanted to capture not kill.

We found the mams gibbering nervously in a huddle around one of the bigger tangle-trees. The little tribe only had about thirty or forty members in it. Neither of us anticipated any trouble. We expected the mams to scatter a bit as we approached, to run about, squeaking like they always did, maybe to scream and pound their chests, as sometimes happened.

What really happened took us completely by surprise.

The mams attacked.

I suppose it must have been panic that motivated them, or fear. There was no organisation, no concerted effort, they were mams after all.

But what happened was bad enough. As Kchtaal and I approached they began to mill around, jumping up and down, screeching louder and louder. I linked with Kchtaal and he shrugged, mentally. We continued forwards. Then from high in the tree, came the first surprise. Rocks. The mams were throwing rocks at us!

The first rock struck Ichar on the head. He fell to the ground and I could see blood seeping from the crest of his skull. I ran to him, but somehow there seemed to be hairy bodies in the way. Bodies on which I stamped furiously. The screeching sound they made increased. Now I couldn't tell if the sound was only outside my head or inside it as well. Was that Kchtaal screaming at me? I tried to *link*. I tried to —

Something tangled in my feet. My net. I fell to the ground, scrambling madly. I turned over and saw sticks in hairy fists raised against the starlight. Rocks looped out of the darkness, smashing into the ground around me. Something wet trickled down the side of my face. Was I bleeding? Had one of the vermin *bitten* me?

The sticks began to rise and fall. Now I began to feel the pain. The smell was overpowering. The mams were all over me, screeching, beating me and each other in a frenzy of blood-lust, their teeth ripping at my skin.

I felt a hot breath on my cheek, closed my eyes so they could not be bitten. The Egg only knew what filthy diseases these vermin carried. *How dare they*, I thought. *I am a Prince! A Silurian* —

Then one of the sticks crunched down onto my skull crest and

when I awoke the forest was burning. Further towards the plains a volcanic eruption had split the ground. Sparks and little trickles of lava were already glimmering in the distance. I looked around. The ground was littered with twenty or thirty hairy bodies. One or two were dragging themselves away on damaged limbs. In the middle of this carnage was a larger form.

Kchtaal.

I ran to him. No life stirred in his breast. His third eye was fixed open, an expression of rage on his face. This was how the mams had finally been dispatched. Kchtaal had saved my life. And the mams had killed him for his courage.

I threw back my head and screamed my rage into the night; twenty paces away a hairy form squealed and fell dead to the ground.

Then I picked up my dead friend and began to walk back to the city.

I met father near the city. He had come out into the night and was looking for me. He saw Kchtaal in my arms but made no attempt to take him from me.

There was no comfort in him for me when he *linked*. —The city is unsafe because of the earthquake. The entrance to the shelter has been buried under tons of rubble. We cannot go in there.—

I gaped silently. —What are we to do?—

—We must try to reach the northern city where Oldel is Leader. The shelters there will have room for us.—

—But Kchtaal—

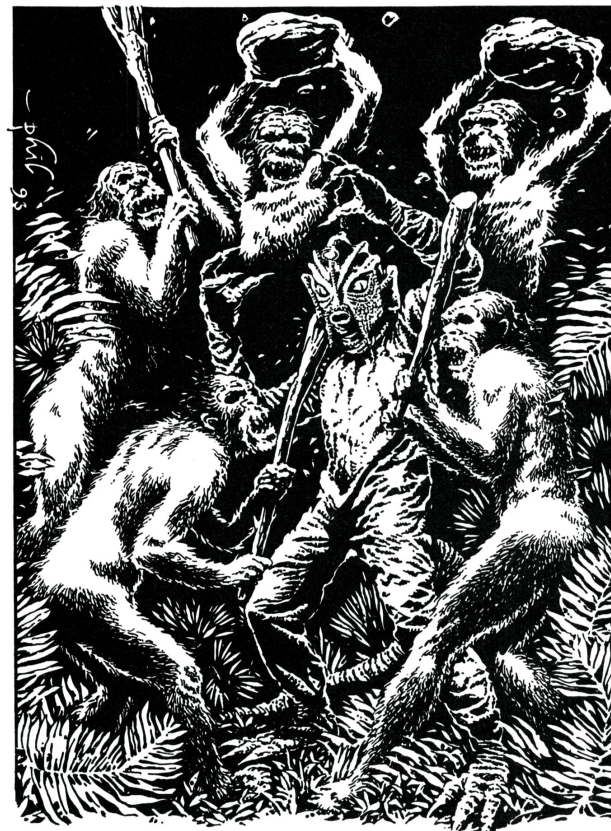
—The choice to hunt tonight was yours, Morka. Now you have another choice. Bury your friend or carry him with us.—

—I cannot leave him!—

—If you cannot leave the past behind you, then the burden is yours to carry alone.—

—Father, what do you mean? I don't understand.—

—I pray that you will understand when you are older.— Without another word, he turned and



walked away into the burning night.

I hesitated for a moment, remembering the cold thrill of fear. The image of a stick in a hairy fist silhouetted against the glowing disk of the *Stranger*. Then I, too, began to walk.

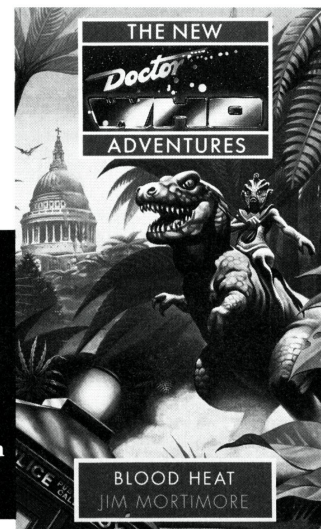
As I walked the weight of Kchtaal in my arms turned my fear into anger and then into a deep, unforgiving rage.

A rage that would last a hundred million years.

Jim Mortimore

**Doctor Who -
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Blood Heat**
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Jim Mortimore
with a cover by
Jeff Cummins.

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Prelude

The DIMENSION RIDERS

The security systems of the Panatropic Net slammed into action as soon as the intruder was pinpointed.

It was almost as if he knew the system from within. As if he had created it himself, in fact. And then he just walked in, leaving the inoculation programs powerless.

The portal opened in front of him, a bleached white. With his umbrella held before him like a shield, he waltzed through. He raised his hat at the two banks of protectors. Their holographic helmets and stasers glinted in the moonlight.

"Can't have you hanging around," he said, and made a couple of adjustments to the space around him, creating an access tunnel.

A dark space opened before him, outlined by neatly-pixelled rows of blank white lockers. The linear search had already found the one he was looking for, and he rapped on it with his umbrella, initiating a pre-programmed operation. The globe of data, like an iridescent beachball, floated out for him, and he caught it in one hand.

He recognised the data, and so he should have done, as most of it pertained to him. What he was doing was strictly forbidden by the Time Lords, but he hadn't got where he was today by listening to them.

"You're more trouble than you're worth," he said to the globe. "Time to leave."

Something resisted. Claws of red and green light, shooting from the locker, tried to pull the treasure back in. But he glowered at them with his dark eyes.

"No," he said. "Mine now." He closed his eyes. "Escape," he ordered the globe.

It pulsed once from within and then split open, pixels scattering into infinity.

The intruder gave a satisfied nod, and tapped on the door of the locker once more. It flipped shut.

"Destructive reading," he muttered to himself. "Almost as bad as book-burning." Interfacing again, he closed his eyes, programmed the release codes. "Still," he said, and his words hung in the air like clouds. "All in a good cause."

They had only got the deflectors working when they were three hemi-traks from Lightbase.

Captain Romulus Terrin was not a man who objected overtly to an interruption of his routine – he liked to think he had a flexible mind, after all. But as the *Icarus* had lifted itself from the pad, to the accompaniment of an almost constant chatter of reports from the intent TechnOps, he was in little doubt that there were a dozen Survey Ships in dock which were better equipped for space.

He fielded the reports as best he could. Deflectors eighty per cent operative. Weaponry at standby capacity. Terrin didn't need anybody to tell him about the lighting. It was enough to hear the clapping and cheering when it kicked into full power, and Gessner slid out from under the console with a modest shrug. Terrin nodded at the young TechnOp, to show that his efforts were appreciated.

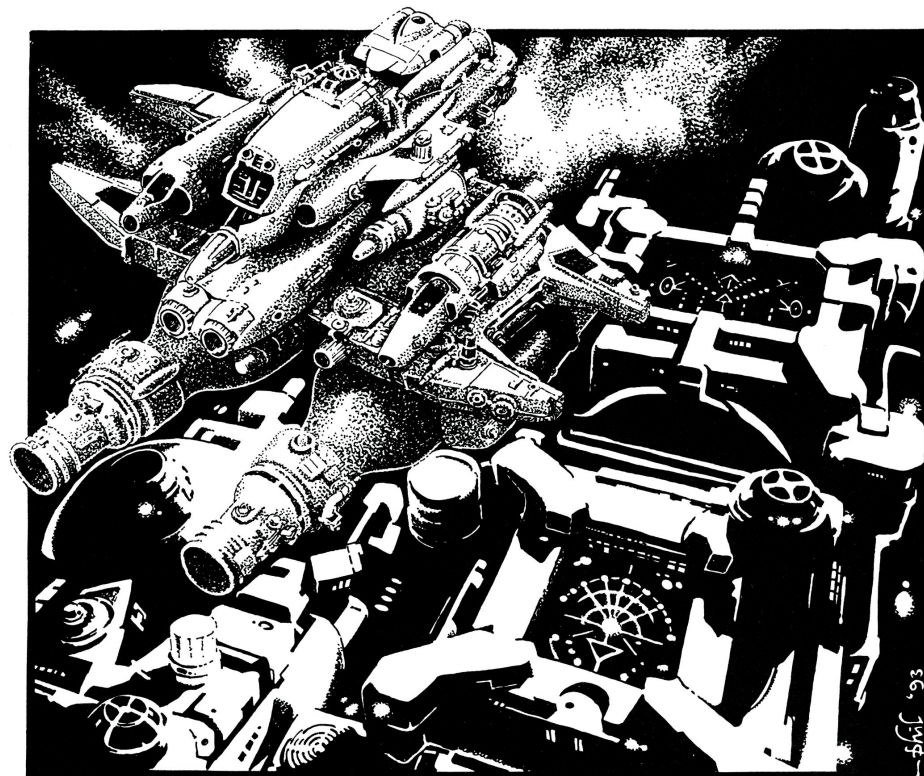
"Why us?" said Darius Chaynor. He was thinking aloud.

Terrin glanced at his slim, tanned Second Officer. "Haven't you heard, Mr Chaynor? We're renowned for troubleshooting. There's trouble, they send us in, we get shot."

A ripple of laughter went round the low, compact Bridge. The joke was appreciated even by those who had heard it before, which was pretty much everyone now that this mission was nearly over.

Nearly over. One last investigation for the Terran Survey Ship. The mysterious silence from Station Q4, the major strategic and scientific base on the edge of the Spiral Arm, had continued despite the sending of a reconnaissance team. The authorities on Lightbase, last outpost before the Station, were ever mindful of back-up, and they wanted the *Icarus* up and running. Nobody liked pessimism, but the team ought to have called in by now. In space, people didn't keep quiet when things were going fine. They made sure they told you about it, because that made everybody happy. Lightbase had assigned the *Icarus* because of the experience of the crew and their proven aptitude to work as a team and to get results. That was what Captain Terrin had been told.

Terrin noticed that Quallem didn't spare a smile. The girl was intent on her scanner, and all he could see was the back of her head, her ringlets a deep orange under the lights. He worried about First Officer Quallem sometimes.



Had done, ever since the Academy. That was a long time ago, and some of it was best forgotten.

"Attaining EV," said the pilot.

"On our way, people," Terrin said, to no-one in particular. "And remember, we're discreet. The ways of gentleness and the paths of peace."

He saw Listrelle Quallem's head half-turn towards him, as if she were about to say something, but she seemed to decide against it. Terrin decided she was probably trying to contextualise his last remark, for the Captain's twentieth century quotations were sometimes lost on his crew. He usually didn't mind too much.

The Sciences or the Arts? That had been James Edwin Rafferty's difficult choice, for he was equally proficient in both at Harrow, and loved the East German novel as much as quantum theory. In the end, science had won, and the eager astrophysics graduate had finally risen to fill Oxford University's newest post, that of Professor of Extra-Terrestrial Studies. He took care, though, to keep his bookshelves and his wine cellar as well-stocked as his diskettes, for James Rafferty was a man of culture, a man of refinement. He was a widower now, with a long, tanned face below a crisp array of silvery hair, still an impressive man for many women of all ages. His voice encompassed words like honey on freshly-toasted bread, rode language with the grace of a swallow in flight.

He also happened to be a long-standing friend of the Doctor.

He had found the note in his pigeon-hole

after returning from a seminar one Thursday afternoon. It looked as if it had been there some time, for it was dusty and creased, and the typing on the page had faded to brown – and yet he swore that his pigeon-hole had been empty at lunchtime the previous day. With his glasses in place, Professor Rafferty had read the note before going into the Senior Common Room.

It said: "Will arrive tomorrow with friends, all being well. Report anything unusual. Regards – the Doctor."

James felt a shiver of fear and excitement. He had seen and heard things of which his colleagues knew nothing. Now, as he sat there with them, making small talk about Faculty dinners and taking care to pass the port in the right

direction, he wondered what was going to happen tomorrow.

For the Doctor, in James's experience, rarely brought calm in his wake.

Daniel Blythe



*Doctor Who -
The New Adventures:
The Dimension Riders*

Written by
Daniel Blythe
with a cover by
Jeff Cummins.

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Prelude

The Left-handed Hummingbird

It was very dark down this end of the house. Jacqui moved slowly, one hand pushed against the wall, the other protectively covering her swollen belly. She had to take off her shoes, to try and move more quietly, but all she'd managed to do was make her feet cold.

There was a collective shout of laughter from somewhere upstairs. The soldiers were enjoying their Christmas Eve party. Jacqui had gone to a lot of trouble to make sure they had a good time, smuggling bottles of booze into the house in paper bags, holding them so tight so they wouldn't clink. The Lieutenant hadn't suspected a thing.

The last time she'd been down the pub she'd made a break for it, slipping away from the soldiers and into the women's loo with some crazy plan of climbing out the window. There wasn't a window, anyway, as it turned out; even if there was, she and the baby probably wouldn't have fitted through together.

In the end the uniforms came in and got her, looking faintly embarrassed as they stomped into the ladies' in their big tough boots.

There were still guards on all the doors and the gate, but the inside of the house was dead

quiet. Only the party sounds and snores from some of the rooms punctuated the winter silence.

Jacqui's fingers slid over the handle of the door.

She reached into the pocket of her overalls and took out a single key, deftly removed from the Lieutenant's master set this afternoon, just after lunch. When she said she wanted to help with the cleaning, they'd thought she was just bored, waiting around for her turn for the tests. But she knew from being in prison that cleaners can get in anywhere. Anywhere they like.

She pushed open the door and said, "I heard you screaming."

Until now, she'd only glimpsed the inside of the room. She knew there was a bed, and something that went beep. Now she saw that the low electronic sound came from an EEG machine, trailing long wires like the tentacles of an octopus, reaching out to the dark figure in the bed.

The man turned to look at her, and she could see the curve of his face reflecting the green light of the EEG screen, his eyes startlingly clear in the darkness. Jacqui felt the heat start up in her face. "Well," she said. "I didn't hear

you." She put both of her hands on her belly.

He didn't say anything, just looked at her. How come he was so quiet? How long had he been here? A week, two weeks? Jacqui edged into the room. It was even colder inside.

"When I first came here," she went on, the words spilling out of her in a stage whisper, "they thought I was the psychic. But it's not me. It's the kid." She grinned suddenly. "I picked out his daddy specially, he was working at a petrol station, he had the most beautiful skin. Deep deep brown, and smooth as an apple. I chose him because I wanted my baby to have that skin. But the kid got something more. A little extra. You know?"

The grin slid off her face under his cloudy stare. "Can you understand me?" No answer. Maybe they'd put drugs in the food. She'd seen the metal trays they carried in to him, making sure they closed the door before anyone could get a look inside. "You can trust me. They won't let me go either."

She hesitated, squatted with difficulty beside his bed. "So, Junior, he heard you screaming. He woke me up the first time. I could hear him having nightmares, down there... you know?" No answer. "It's just... all those soldiers who brought you here, and the locked room, and all the guards. The Lieutenant won't let anyone near you. You must be something pretty special, right? A space alien," and her voice dropped into a conspiratorial whisper. "That's what the soldiers say. A real live space alien."

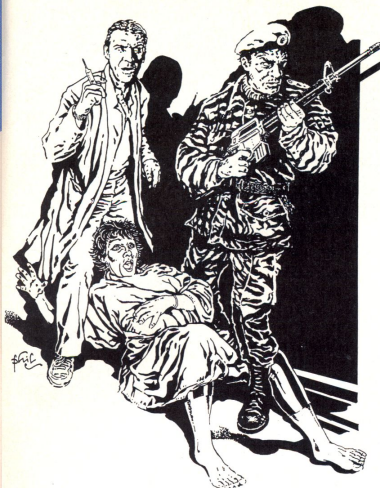
Why wouldn't he answer? She patted her stomach for the comforting feel of the firm curve of flesh, wanting to explain. "I dream what the baby dreams. He sends me messages. Usually it's just darkness and warmth, lovely. This time it was pyramids and flowers, and a blazing blue sky... and someone with a smile like a stab of light and hair whiter than sand... impossible things, things he's never seen. Is that where you come from? Or is it somewhere you've visited?"

She realised her voice had fallen into a sing-song, the lilting aimlessness of voices around a campfire, while guitars and joints were passed from hand to hand, pungent smoke drifting up to the stars.

Maybe he didn't have any friends either, no-one would come looking for him, to take him away. How long would it be before Jacqui was back outside, under the stars? Maybe they'd never let her go. Maybe they'd keep her baby. And what would they do with their space alien? What would they do with him? She tried to imagine the place he'd come from, the places he might have been, rocking through the sky in his UFO, like a magic carpet ride...

"Get out," said the man. She was so startled by his voice that it was a moment before she noticed the EEG machine was moving, making horrible scratching noises as its needles trailed across the paper. A moment later, Junior kicked, a sharp movement deep inside her.

"Please," he said, and his hands had pulled free of the covers of the bed and she saw light glinting on the handcuffs tangled between his wrists. "Go! Now!"



It hadn't occurred to her that the reason he was locked away might be that he was dangerous.

Jacqui felt Junior kicking and kicking at her womb, and she climbed unsteadily to her feet and stumbled across the cold floor, pushed back by the panic in his voice as he screamed at her, desperately, "Get out, get away, get out, get out, GET OUT!"

Oh God! Junior was screaming! The lights came slamming on around her, and there were soldiers and men and women in white coats running in. But Jacqui didn't hear it, Jacqui didn't see it, she heard and saw what Junior was hearing and searing, a great wind exploding out of nothing, a great gush of blue flame—

—exploding, flooding into the baby, too much for it to hold, too much stop it's too much it's much too much oh God stop—

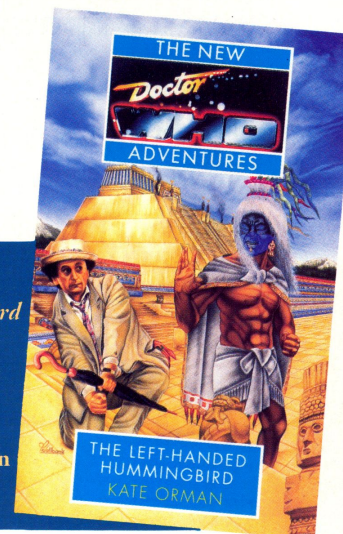
—and the alien screaming, because he was being used, because he couldn't stop it, stop the flood that was pouring through him into the child—

—a terrible face painted blue and black, laughing and laughing, white hair floating around the warrior's head as he let loose his battle cry—

—they stepped over Jacqui, stepped around the hippie curled on the floor in the hallway, taking no notice of her.

Kate Orman

**Doctor Who -
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with a cover by
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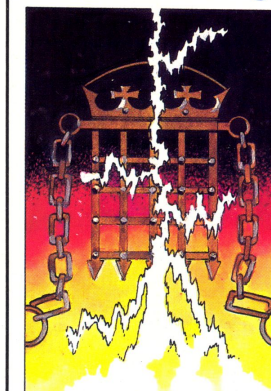
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Archive.....THE MIND OF EVIL
What the Papers Said.....25th ANNIVERSARY
Prelude.....CONUNDRUM

Designers PERI GODBOLD
Assistant Editor MARCUS HEARN
Editor GARY RUSSELL



Prelude

Conundrum

When finally it was over, the snow came down again. It fell upon the rooftops and it fell amongst the

trees. It made the roads impassable, but that was all right. Few people used them anyway. It was going to be a White Christmas. There

was no denying that. Christmas '93, New Year '94. A time for drink and partying, a time to block out memories. A time to forget the sorrow and the pain, to hope that maybe by the time the snow had melted, the scar tissue beneath might finally have healed.

It was Christmas Eve in Arandale. It was the last day of Malcolm Blyth's old life. It was the first day of his new one.

He swayed unsteadily as he tramped across the fields. His senses were blurred by alcohol, his feeling swathed in melancholy. He wore the uniform and insignia of a police sergeant, though his jacket was unbuttoned and his tie loose around the neck. He should really have been getting home, getting out of these old clothes forever. Getting back to his wife and kids, and the preparations round the Christmas tree, but he wanted to put off that moment. He wanted the old life to last a little bit longer.

Because he didn't know what he was going to do next.

The memories still hurt. Almost two months later, he still woke in the heat of the night and lay with heart pounding, sensing danger in every shadow of the room. Over thirty years in the force – thirty years of experience as the 'friendly local bobby', and yet he had still been caught completely offguard by the events of that November; those days when the energies beneath the castle had been unleashed, when a friend had turned into an enemy, when lives had been lost and secrets revealed... when all hell had been let loose in the village he was supposed to be protecting.

Nothing could be the same after that. Nothing about his once cosy life and his once cosy job. These last seven weeks, he'd been jumping at his own shadow, barking at anyone who dared catch him by surprise. There was no reason for any of it; things could hardly have been calmer. Well, there was the day that Tina was carried off to hospital, of course. And then there was Rosemary, and her wonderful yet terrifying discovery in the shower that cold mid-November morning. Blyth liked to think of those events as just tiny epilogues to the weirdness, aberrations that would not be repeated. Since then, things had been absolutely normal – perhaps more so than usual, thanks to the absence of Mason Grimshaw.

Okay, so Billy James Junior had gone missing for a few days, but there was nothing untoward there, just a juvenile tantrum. Then Rosemary's kids had come home for their holidays and, along with the Mitchell boy and the Daniels girl, had solved the mystery of the town hall ghosts. Just a small band of smugglers with sheets on their

heads. Blyth would have worried had things been any different.

So why did he still feel he was living on the edge? Why did he spend each day in fear, terrified lest the chaos break out again, lest he still be in his position of responsibility when it did?

Eventually he found himself on the bridge. He wasn't sure how he had reached it, how he had walked there from the village without even noticing. He remembered how Norman had once sat here, night after night, not such a long time ago. Like Norman, thoughts of jumping flashed through his head. He knew they weren't serious ones – he could never do that to his family. And in any case, the river below had frozen solid in the cold. He'd probably break both his legs and end up in the hospital, and then where would he be?

Besides, he knew it intellectually, anyway. The thought had comforted him through the long, gruelling weeks of December, as he worked out his notice and looked forward to the day when the fear would finally end. His superiors had graciously accepted his early retirement, muttering a few platitudes about the difficulties he had had to face and how they were so sorry it had all been like this. An hour ago it had finally ended, his last half-day concluding with a round of drinks in The Black Cat Tavern and a few handshakes and farewells from people he would probably see back there in three days time anyway. Not much to mark the end of a career, he thought. Not much to mark the end of a life.

He heard the village clock strike three. At least they'd been able to fix that, though it had taken them long enough. Children's voices drifted on the wind: *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*. It was time he rested himself. Time he went home.

He was more aware of the cold now, but at least it cleared his mind a little. He wondered where his cap and overcoat were, though he supposed it didn't much matter anymore. His wife would be worrying about him, wondering where he'd got to. They'd planned to do their last minute shopping that afternoon; crackers for the table, presents for the children. Life would soon settle back into its accustomed series of patterns. He might even take up a hobby, perhaps see about doing something with the garden once summer came round again.

Or maybe not.

He trudged onwards then, through the clean white snow, following the voices back into the village. A smile pulled at the corners of his mouth as he passed the police station again. He barely gave a second glance to the shadowed passage where the third body had been found. His footsteps seemed lighter, his neck and shoulders more relaxed than they had ever been.

Then he turned the next corner, and the weirdness began again.

There was a telephone box in the street.

He recognised the type: a battered police call box, of the sort in use when he'd first joined up. He felt almost nostalgic, the image harkening back to his younger days. But he knew the box had not been there before. There were none of its type left in Arandale, certainly none placed bang in the middle of the road.

A mixture jumbled in his mind. He was worried, frightened, concerned (perhaps strangely excited?) – he didn't want this to be any of his business, but the sick churning of his

stomach told him he would have no say in this matter. He had to get away from this place, it was all he could think to do. He would tell his wife tonight – they could move up to her parents' house in Manchester, for a while at least.

But he had to know what was going on. This was still his village.

When the door of the box opened, Blyth didn't know quite what to feel. Relief? Annoyance? He recognised the new arrival, of course – the short man with the piercing eyes and the crumpled cream suit. He had filed in numerous forms about him, wasted hundreds of man-hours trying to track him down. What was this clown doing back here? Why had he chosen today, of all days? What evil might befall him, Malcolm Blyth, even in his new role as innocent bystander?

The stranger seemed not to notice him at first, his brow furrowed as he stepped from the box and took in his surroundings. Then a smile lit up his face, and he doffed his fedora hat politely and wished the ex-sergeant a very good afternoon.

Blyth tried to match him for casualness, tried to affect an expression that was not unfriendly but which at the same time showed just a hint of disapproval. It was no good. His shoulders were trembling and his stomach ached.

"Hello again Doctor," he mumbled, awkwardly.

"Dr Who, actually!" the stranger corrected him, not unpleasantly. A boy and a girl stuck their heads round the doorway behind him. "And these are my grandchildren, John and Gillian. Tell me sergeant, are you aware that almost everyone in this village has been kidnapped by the Vogans and replaced with robot doubles?"

Blyth's jaw fell open, his eyes bulged and his heart sank.

It was starting all over again.

The snow carried on falling. Elsewhere in the village, a child leapt for joy as he fancied he



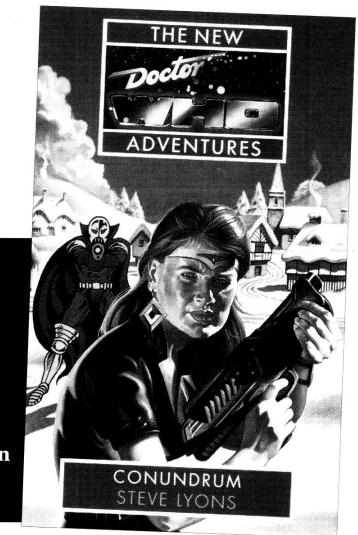
heard the sound of sleigh bells approaching. A grandmother smiled as she put the finishing touches to a very special parcel. A young woman fled from her android attacker, but was chopped down and killed instantly.

Life in the village went on. The latest, newest adventures began. And a Merry Christmas to all of you at home.

Steve Lyons



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Prelude

No Future

General Norton fanned himself with his clipboard as he and Captain Alex Pike sauntered across the tarmac. "I'm pleased that you're going to be our man at UNIT, Alex. The President's been talking about exchanging information concerning ET incursion, so I guess you'll be party to that."

"Within national security considerations, sir. I'll be working with Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart to decide what's permissible between allies, and to figure out what we can give the Soviets."

"Some of the hawks at the Pentagon want them to take it on the nose. You

heard that they had some bugs near Leningrad last year?"

"Vodyanoi took care of them, I heard. Lost eighty troopers before one of their Special Forces teams took them out. We can learn from them in that respect, sir. The Kremlin train teams specially to get abducted and then —"

"I don't hold with this abduction business, Alex. Foreign Hazard units globally have never reported a single instance of it."

"Maybe so sir, but that's why I think that the Brigadier's Broadsword plan is so great. When you've got the Special Forces unit, you can put it on swift response, get

to where the bugs are before they head off home." Pike's cheerful features cracked into an easy grin. "Hey, I heard that the President was kind of freaked to hear that it's all true..."

"He went ballistic, Captain. Right before he got elected, you remember he was going on about making all the UFO stuff public? All it took was one look at the Axos file to make him clam right up. Then we showed him this. Okay, Lieutenant," Norton flicked a pass at a guard outside the hanger doors. The guard clicked to attention and unlocked a side door, allowing them inside.

Powerful spotlights shone within Hanger 13 twenty-four hours a day. In the centre of the great space stood an alien craft, held up by scaffolding. Its hull shone silver. "Blue Room's through here..." Norton muttered, smiling at Alex Pike's awed expression. "Get used to it, Captain. This is Above Top Secret, UNIT's everyday business."

"Are there, er, ETs working here, sir?" Norton laughed. "No Greys here, Alex. UNIT have got one on their books though. Hey, I love your face. No, he's really humanoid, and he's one of the things that we won't get them to open up about, so be nice to him when you meet him, okay?"

"I'll try not to shoot him, sir." Pike grinned. They passed through a door into the Blue Room. It lived up to the description. The walls were shining blue, and two technicians in blue overalls moved between blue tanks. In them strange alien shapes bubbled, suspended in nutrient liquids. "Hey, are they alive?"

"No. The blue is to stop them decaying. They actually seem allergic to certain frequencies in the spectrum. We found them in New Mexico in the Fifties, and haven't learned a lot since. In fact we know very little about — hey!" The door had slammed behind them. "Be more careful, Haig, we —" The guard from outside was walking towards them.

Pike glanced over his shoulder. Behind them, the two technicians had turned to watch. Like they were waiting for —

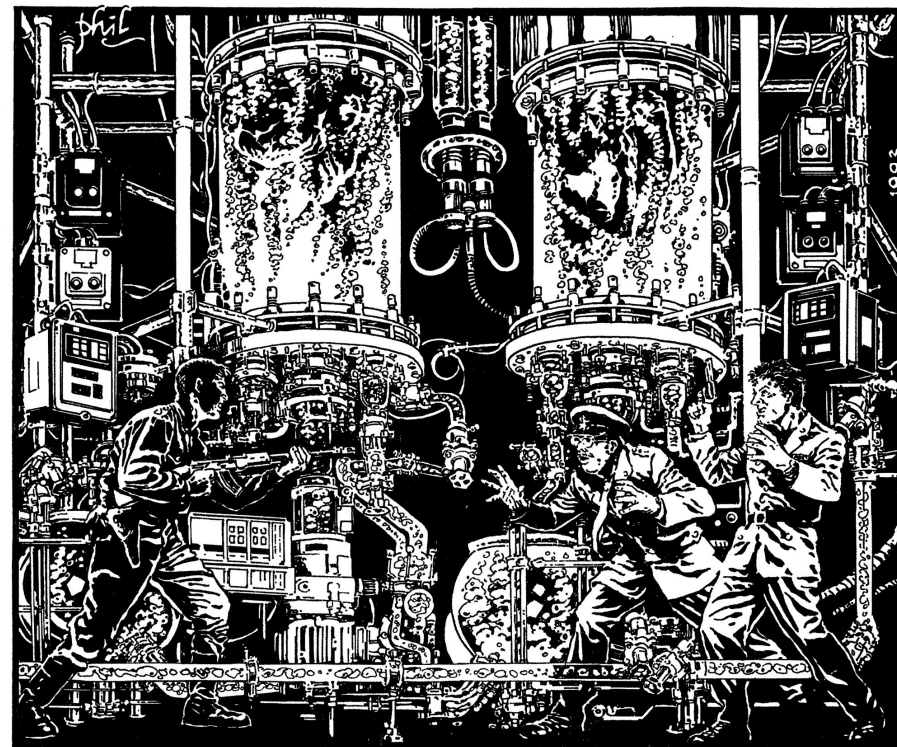
Alex Pike snatched for his automatic.

The three men ran at them.

Norton grabbed the guard before he could bring his rifle to bear, throwing his weight at the man, only to find his hands flailing through a haze of iridescent light. The General stumbled, then screamed, falling to his knees and clutching his head as the blaze that had been a man engulfed him.

Pike feinted a move to the right, then dived between the technicians and sprinted for the door. It opened a second before he got there. He fired twice, and an MP flew backwards, throwing his rifle into the air.

Blinking in the sudden glare of the sun, a bolt of light shot through the air and solidified in the front seat. A technician lunged at Pike, so he let go of the wheel,



sending the vehicle skidding off at a dangerous angle. Pike grabbed the man and found himself wrestled into the back seat as the jeep screeched randomly over the tarmac.

"So," Pike yelled. "Which planet are you from?"

The man only laughed in reply. Pike kicked suddenly upwards, sending the alien spinning off the back of the jeep. He vanished in a blast of light before he hit the ground. "Yippie ky-ay," Pike muttered, struggling to get into the front seat.

Another ray of white light flickered over his shoulder, through the dashboard and into the engine which cut out. Pike leaped out and started to run. Behind him, a line of marching figures had appeared. In front of him lay the perimeter fence of the base. Back in the jeep, a human figure flashed into existence once more. "Give it up, Pike!" he shouted. "We're in charge of Hanger 13 now!"

"Yeah?" Pike kept running. "You ought to be exhibits in it!"

The man flashed into lightning, and appeared in front of Pike, between him and the fence.

Pike stopped, seemingly despairing, bending to rest his hands on his knees. "So, what you gonna do with me?"

"You will be converted to the glorious cause."

"I usually hide behind the couch when guys like you come calling," Pike looked up. "Hey, isn't that —" He jumped at the

man, shoulder charging him towards the fence. At the last second Pike threw himself to the ground.

The alien hit the electrified fence at full tilt. There was a flash of light and he vanished. The fence section crumpled into fizzing black strands. Distant sirens began to sound.

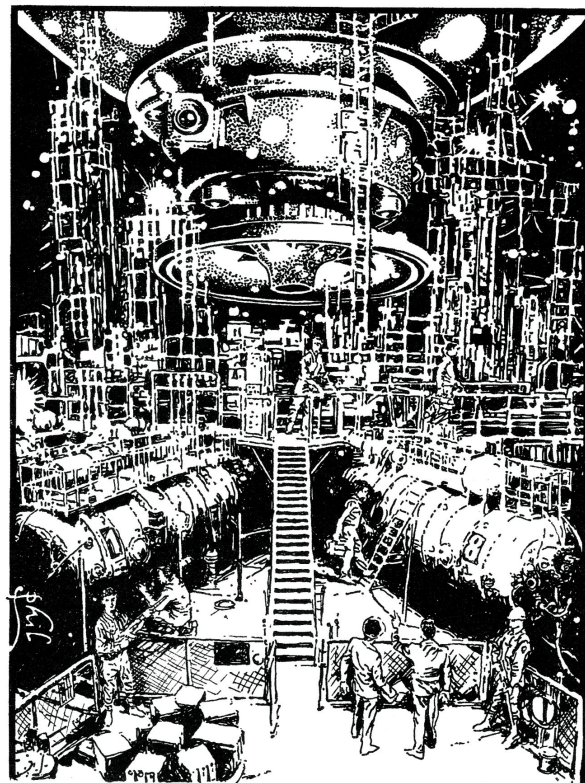
"Life is hard, and then you die," muttered Pike, glancing back at the approaching line of marching figures. He ran towards the fence, and leaped at it. He pulled himself up, stamping down on the mesh with his boots.

A jeep was speeding along the outside of the perimeter, and Pike grinned as he recognised a familiar voice calling from the front seat. Frankheimer. The figures behind him broke into a run at the sight.

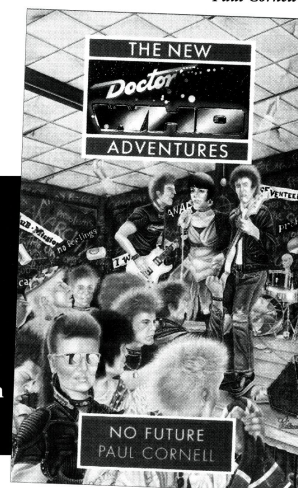
Pike ran towards the jeep. "Hey," the soldier called from the front seat. "I thought you were going to England?"

"That's still the plan," Pike jumped into the jeep and Frankheimer accelerated away. "But whether I get there... we're just gonna have to wait and see..."

Paul Cornell



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Prelude

TRAGEDY DAY

Tucked between the time-twisted curves on the fringes of the Pristatrek galaxy is a pink sphere just large enough to be classified as a planet. It is the eighty-seventh of the bodies that whirl and twist about the star called Frinjel. The atmosphere of the planet continues to thin, and the modest mountains and small seas that once attracted holiday makers have now eroded and evaporated. One person still lives on Frinjel 87, though.

He sits cross-legged outside his house. He is naked and very old and his eyes are closed. He is covered in pink dust. It's been four years since he ate or drank or slept. He stopped breathing two months ago. But his mind is still alive, and his meditations have taken it as far out as

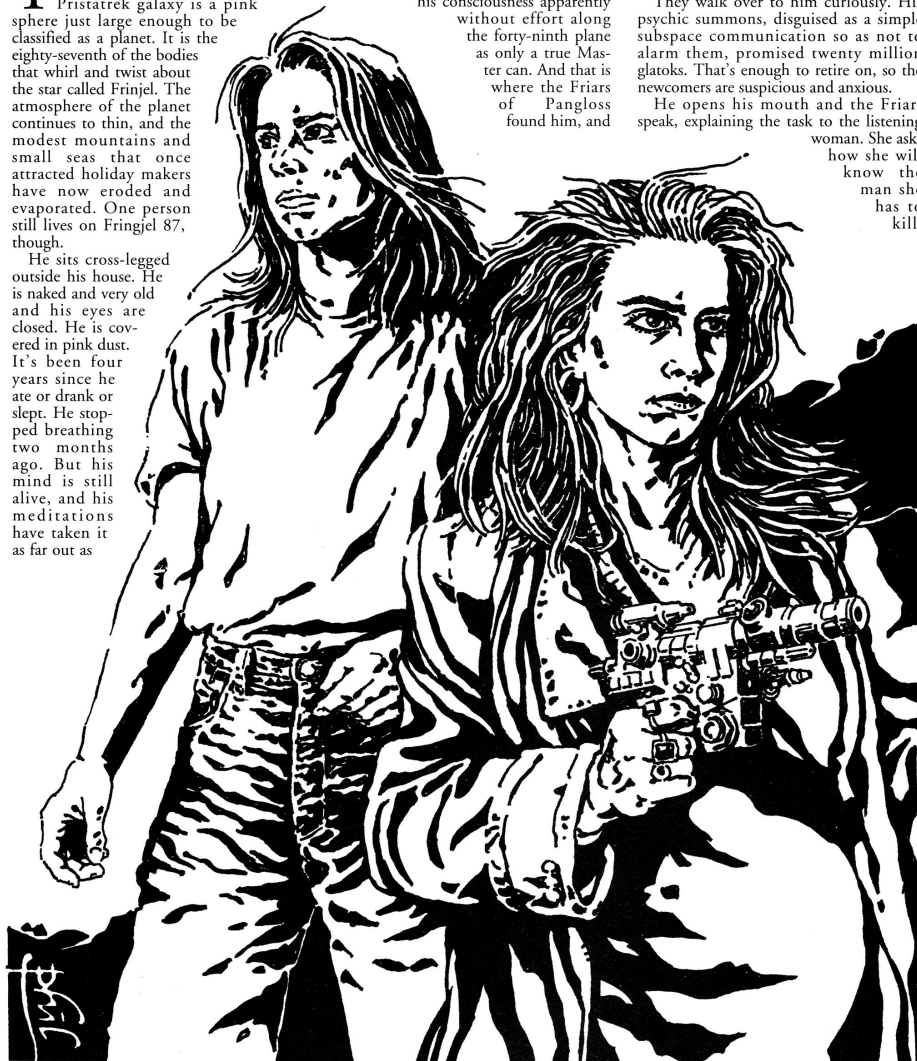
the cloudy rim of Spyra and the gluonfalls of Cleve. This is the way he lives, shifting his consciousness apparently without effort along the forty-ninth plane as only a true Master can. And that is where the Friars of Pangloss found him, and

why they selected him. He is the link with their distant domain. He is their puppet.

A small spacecraft touches down right next to him. The door opens and a pregnant woman steps out. She is carrying a gun. A teenage boy emerges after her. Both mother and son possess handsome dark eyes and full pink lips.

They walk over to him curiously. His psychic summons, disguised as a simple subspace communication so as not to alarm them, promised twenty million glatoks. That's enough to retire on, so the newcomers are suspicious and anxious.

He opens his mouth and the Friars speak, explaining the task to the listening woman. She asks how she will know the man she has to kill.



In reply, the Friars transmit a pyramid made of red crystal into the old man's hands. She takes it and back in a week's time to collect her payment. She walks back to her spacecraft.

The boy remains. He stares at the face of the old man and admits to himself that he feels scared. Then he follows his mother back to the ship, looking at the prints that his boots are making in the dust.

The ship takes off and the old man is alone again. The Friars slip from his mind but he knows they will return. They are beings so humourless and inflexible. He wonders how they have learned to bend the wills of others. What enormous evil is the foundation of their great powers?

The Supreme One finished off his breakfast of fried lizard wings and dabbed his lips clean. It was time to check the morning reports. Rows of neat black type on crisp white paper told him of the night's activities on Olleril.

The wars between the independent states were progressing nicely. If all continued to go well, the predicted rout of the peace-keeping force would occur by Tuesday at the latest. That would give the International Union the excuse to begin

ning. He did a quick mental calculation and estimated he could kill off about four million by winter.

In Empire City, the most troublesome place on the planet, riots were causing structural damage close to the construction stores. Something was needed to keep the people calm. He chewed the end of his pen and thought. Some sick children in the news might do the trick, particularly at this time of year. He would ring Grubb at the Clarion later and ask him to send some cameras out to the hospitals on the South Side.

He closed the folder and rested his large head in the padded rest of his chair. His predecessors in the position of Supreme Leader of Luminus had left behind an obsolete method of global control that he judged costly, inefficient and irksome. Too much paperwork, he thought, and not enough strong, direct action.

But not to worry. Things would be changing soon. He smiled. Oh yes, things on Olleril would be very different after Tragedy Day.

The battered blue police box shell of the TARDIS spun through the space/time vortex, the light on its roof-top flashing nonsensically. For the first time in many years, the erratic Doctor was not in control of his equally erratic craft. He had activated the navigation controls on a random setting, more because he fancied a surprise than for any other reason. Now he was relaxing in the TARDIS jacuzzi, scrubbing his back and playing with his rubber duck. Ace was along the corridor in her room, reading some old comics that she'd found in a cupboard. And Bernice was watching the Time-Space Visualizer and laughing her head off.

In the empty control room, a melodic electronic burble came from the console. It was as if the TARDIS was pleased that its master and his companions were friends again. Levers and switches started to move by themselves as the random co-ordinates aligned with the real world interface and the materialisation process began.

Gareth Roberts

shelling. The conflict had to last until the end of the year. It was essential to his plans.

Vijjan mortality rates were still not nearly high enough, though. He picked up his fountain pen and made a note to authorise the release of a class C viral strain over Vijja that afternoon. The milk of the Vijjan mothers would be contaminated and the harvest poor for the third year run-

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Prelude

Legacy

The lights were making him sweat – a somewhat uncommon feeling for a Martian Lord. He looked down at the table beside him – a decanter full of spring water, and a ridiculously small glass. If he even tried scooping it up, he'd probably crush it to granules. With a soft sigh he resigned himself to a dry throat.

"So tell me, Professor. Isn't it time you retired? Time you allowed the torch of your exploits to be passed to younger. . . er. . . hands?"

Professor Rhukk feigned a hissing laugh and tapped his interviewer's knee insincerely. "Like holo-vid interviewers, old archaeologists never retire – they just buy new towels."

The interviewer politely laughed as the live audience roared at his discomfort. As a large grin spread across his face, his eyes shot hatred at the large but slender Martian beside him. "Moving swiftly on,

Professor. I understand your First Brother has been placed in charge of the *Bruk*. Bearing in mind that the Lassal Hatchery have a history of militaristic honours, are you considered a freak by taking an interest in less. . . aggressive subjects?"

Rhukk hissed slightly. "I have not spoken to my First Brother Savaar in many years but nevertheless, I am proud of his achievements as he is of mine. His promotion to the command of the Galactic Federation's most illustrious craft is a very great honour to every member of our Hatchery."

"But are your hatchery-brothers as proud of you?"

Rhukk leaned forward and the interviewer took an involuntarily squirm further towards the back of his chair. "I suggest you ask them. I'm here to promote the Braxiatel Collection's funding of my expedition to Phaester Osiris. That and my new

disc-text of course, available from Bowketts Universal Publications next week. It'll only cost you –"

Rhukk's words were lost under a thunderous roar and round of applause as the live audience were enjoying watching the interviewer being ridiculed by his guest. Rhukk glowed in the appreciation. He glanced down at the decanter and glass beside him. Gingerly he picked each up and poured himself some water. "How kind of you to make me feel welcome," he smiled at the interviewer. "This glass is wonderfully appropriate for a Martian!"

The interviewer's reply was lost under another rousing cheer and clapping of hands.

Later, Rhukk was looking at a shuttle in the Holo-vid company's space port. It was ridiculously small – he'd probably have to cut his arms and legs off to get into it. Obviously revenge from that fool of an interviewer. Rhukk allowed a hissing chuckle. He'd enjoyed the whole evening. A scurrying sound alerted him to a small furry figure dashing up beside him.

"Professor Rhukk?"
The Martian looked down and grinned. He took off his helmet and bowed slightly. "Ker'a'nol. A very real pleasure to see you again. How is life at GFTV-3?"

"Everything's fine, thank you. I need to talk to you. Urgently. When are you going to Phaester Osiris?"

Rhukk shrugged. "Within the next few weeks. I'm off to see Irving Braxiatel tomorrow to sort out the funding. I gather he's joining forces with your old haunt, the Pakha University. Sharrod's college I think."

The small Pakhar rushed around the tall Martian, waving her paws excitedly. "That's what I need to talk to you about. Sharrod's been working with me and a few associates. We think we're finally on the trail of the Diadem."

Rhukk stopped suddenly. "I think we need to have a bite to eat, Ker'a'nol. Are you busy right now?"

Ker'a'nol smiled. "I've booked a table on Azure. We can be there in an hour and a half. By the way, it's Keri to my friends."

"Lead the way, Keri. Do you have a shuttle or shall I commandeer this ridiculously small thing that this holo-company have seen fit to squeeze into?"

Keri laughed and twitched her whiskers. "I think GFTV-3 can stretch to a bit of fuel and dinner on my expenses, yeah."

Rhukk nodded. "I should have thought a journalist of your calibre would have an open-ended credit account."

"I wish. Don't forget, Neal Corry runs GFTV-3, yeah. The only open-ended account is his with his whiskey supplier."

"Corry hasn't changed then? How is he?"

"Same old loveable dictator. Typical human."

Rhukk stood beside Keri's shuttle and at



a bleep from her data-pad, the side melted away to let them in. After they boarded, the wall rematerialised and a few moments later the shuttle was heading for Azure.

Dinner was a splendid feast. Rhukk dined on genuine Martian *saakab*, while Keri munched on a Pakha *salat von nufstohle*. After a few glasses of *Champagne Florana*, Rhukk and Keri were talking nine to the dozen about their incredibly high-profile careers and the delight they both took in upsetting the establishments that frequently employed them.

"I gather that your coverage of Operation 'Galactic Storm' brought you even more respect and admiration."

Keri looked down. Suddenly serious. "Yes. It also took away a lot of friends. We certainly brought back dramatic, and downright harrowing, holos but I also brought back a few friends in body bags. It's not always the fun and frolics inside battlelines that many people make out. Yeah, I guess that's where I'm lucky working for Neal. He knows when it stops being fun. He gave me a few weeks break. I'm going home to Pakha tomorrow. Then we're off to Peladon."

"Indeed?"
Keri twitched her whiskers. "Yeah. Thought that'd interest you. I'll finally get to meet your First-Brother, Savaar."

"I hope you find him as interesting as the rest of the media do." Rhukk saw a flash of puzzlement cross his companion's furry face. He hissed a sigh. "Don't ask me why, but there is a degree of competition between us that is unhealthy. Savaar and I are just too proud, too typically Martian, to stop. One day, it'll be too late. I'll get crushed in a rock fall or he'll get blown up by Galaxy Five terrorists and the survivor will have a life of regrets." Rhukk shrugged. "Let's change the subject. I want to know about the Diadem."

Keri got excited almost instantly. "Right. We think we've located it, somewhere near the Wavis Ravine. For years the scholars have been looking in the wrong

to date."

Rhukk smiled. "Good. Now, I really must recommend some Martian *geleetaa* as a desert. You will find it better than the finest Pakha truffles."

"Better than Solaadon Chepberry Pie?"
"Of course! Martians taught the Solaadon people everything there is to know about cooking desserts!"

Laughing, Keri called a waiter over.

Three days later, Keri was back on Pakha. Damajina greeted her at the space port. With her was a humanoid, about half a metre taller than Keri. Beside Jina and the human with her, Alec, he was still small. The newcomer was covered in red fur, his long ribbed nose like a Pakha mole. Bulbous eyes glinted in the sunlight and he smiled a row of incisor teeth.

"This is Vega Lexus. Professor Sharrod has sent him on to help us in the Wavis Ravine."

Keri nodded at Vega Lexus. "A pleasure."

"All mine, I assure you," Vega Lexus boomed in a voice deeper than his diminutive size implied. "I have given Jina the necessary details of where we think the Ancient Diadem might be."

Jina held up a 75mm silver laser disc. And shrugged. Keri was too polite to say anything but Alec wasn't.

"Where the hell are we supposed to play that? I haven't seen one of those in about fifteen years."

Jina smiled. "The Pakhar library isn't known for its modern technology, my love. I have had a CDV installed into my 'puter. Kort and I have been sending each other messages on it already."

"Let's go Diadem hunting then," said Keri.

Deep below Pakha's surface lay the Ancient Diadem. It had lain there for many centuries – an object abandoned and forgotten by many.

But the Ancient Diadem wasn't damaged.

Merely recuperating. . .

Gary Russell



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Prelude

THEATRE OF WAR

Source Document

Clisolan's Account of the
Pentillanian Festival on Menaxus

The entire festival took place before an invited audience in the Pentillanian Theatre.

As Oecasian ambassador, I was fortunate to be present at a performance of 'Burgabe's The Hanged Man, which was in this writer's opinion one of his most triumphant works. The play started at exactly 14.00 and was enhanced considerably by the setting, with the Drapanth Mountains visible in the distance as the afternoon suns shone off their western slopes at the start of the play.

The play itself concerned a man whose entire life - his destiny - is mapped out at birth by the gods. He cannot help but play the role written for him in the heavens - a role which culminates in his tragic and undesired death.

Literary criticism and archaeological research are interlinked. The one may illuminate workings and construction either intended or otherwise by an author; the other may reveal the workings of a civilisation and construction techniques of a building.

But the words of the author, however bland and trite, may reveal much about the civilisation and culture of the society he is incidentally documenting. And the architecture of a ruined playhouse will give invaluable insight into the staging techniques and character of the plays performed there.

The Ways of the Worlds
Hugo Dalhwaite, 2012



her poised hand.

The old archivist straightened up as Lannic took the glass. He was still smiling - his face cracked open like a weather-weary statue. A smile of duty rather than displaying any genuine emotion - all part of the act.

'Thank you, Elliniko.' She was not sure she wanted the wine - she resented the interruption.

Elliniko nodded. 'With the compliments of Irving Braxiatel.' He turned and left without waiting to see her surprise.

Lannic watched him make his slow way down the long room back to his workstation near the entrance. Elliniko's shadow followed him along the polished floor, darkening as he crossed the bands of sunlight which shone between the leaded glass of the high curved ceiling. The researchers at the other desks along the length of the book-lined room ignored his progress, intent on the puzzles of the past rather than the enigma of the present.

Lannic returned her attention to the screen in front of her. But the wine set beside it was a distraction. Why should she get special attention? Hardly anyone knew she was at the Braxiatel Collection - certainly she had not considered that its owner would acknowledge her presence.

She sipped at the dry white wine, turning the delicate stem of the glass between



finger and thumb as she examined the engraved pattern - a cluster of small leaves splaying out from a single branch. And as the tiny veins in the leaves caught the sunlight spilling from the windows above her, Camarina Lannic's mind slipped the final pieces together.

Clisolan's account was the key. She had the size from the bill of materials; she had the shape from the De Witte sketch. And now she could place it almost exactly from the journals of the Transpiran Traders coupled with Clisolan's description of the angle of the suns on the distant mountains. She knew where to find the ruins of the Pentillanian Theatre on Menaxus.

The glass hit the polished wood at an angle, wine spilling from the bowl even as it struck. The base remained almost intact, but the engraved bowl shattered, sending etched leaves of glass spinning and dancing across the floor as they were severed from the central stem.

The Rippearean defence sats round Gluvene were knocked out by the first salvo. The land-based surface to space missiles never got off the ground. The Heletian attack was as fierce as it was expected, but the Rippearean division left to stave off the inevitable was ill-equipped and badly trained. The commander was slow to react, and in the ninety seconds it took for his officers to empower themselves to retaliate, the Heletian heavy landers breached the upper atmosphere and lost themselves in the ion layer.

The garrison and munitions at Vanlinx was the main target, although (almost out of charity) a lander was also dispatched to the Palace. The siege of Gluvene had lasted less than seven minutes. As their advancing armada moved on towards Optron and Dosardus, the Heletians hardly noticed that their outer markers also now encompassed the small uninhabited planet of Menaxus.

They were in a mutually melancholy mood when they returned to the TARDIS. Neither would admit it, but they both missed Benny.

'I think we need a break.' The Doctor tossed his hat on to the central column and hurried round the console.

Ace watched the hat rise and fall with the grating vibration of the engines. 'Just us?'

The Doctor glanced up from the con-



sole, apparently startled, and looked round as if to see who else might join them. After a moment he broke into a wide smile. 'Just us.' He leaned forward and flicked a final switch. 'I know a world where the wild Time blows,' he announced to an empty part of the TARDIS.

'Excuse me?'

'Mmm?' he turned and stared at Ace for just long enough for it to be unsettling. 'Alternatively,' he suggested, 'I know a place where the sun never sets.'

'The British Empire?'

The Doctor frowned, ignoring her. 'Or to be more accurate, it's always setting.'

'Oh?' Ace was not impressed.

'I think we could both do with a sunset.' He nodded. 'Yes, that's just what we need at the moment. Very fin de jour. Very.'

He stared at the ceiling, searching for the word...

'Theatrical?' Ace prompted.

He seized on it immediately, ignoring her sarcasm. 'Yes - yes, that's it: theatrical. They do a good line in sunsets.'

'And what's so great about sunsets?' Ace wanted to know.

The Doctor beamed. 'I'll show you,' he said as the central column and the TARDIS gently came to rest.

Justin Richards

The Doctor beamed. 'I'll show you,' he said as the central column and the TARDIS gently came to rest.

Justin Richards



Prelude

ALL-CONSUMING FIRE

In a darkened room, a man wrote a line of symbols on a sheet of vellum. His quill scratched like a mouse in the wainscoting and splattered ink across the paper, but he was an old-fashioned man in many ways, and would have no truck with fountain pens.

A noise at the door made him pause in his writing for a moment, and glance up. The handle of the door was slowly rotating. His head moved from side to side, like a cobra eyeing up its victim, then he smiled slightly and turned his attention back to the pure, austere beauty of mathematics.

When next he looked up the door was open and a dishevelled man was standing before him, holding a revolver.

"Scanlon," said the man behind the desk, "you seem disturbed."

"I ain't the one that's disturbed, mate. It's you! You're a brick short of a full

hod, I reckon."

"Just because I issued an edict that you were to be killed on sight, I hardly think that justifies your appearance in my study. Where are my guards, by the way?"

"Out cold," Scanlon exclaimed. "I coshed 'em."

The man sighed. "Dear me," he murmured, "you just can't get the staff these days."

"I got no argument wiv them. It's you I want."

"And what exactly is it that you want with me, Scanlon?"

"I want to live!" Scanlon cried, his face flushed and sweating.

The man shook his head, emphasising the ever-present palsy. "You attempted to leave my employ, Scanlon. Nobody resigns from the Family, you know that."

"A lot of the guys 'ave done it. Why

single me out?"

"Oh, I'll get around to the rest of them eventually, but for the moment they are beyond my reach. As you should have been."

Scanlon wiped a cuff across his forehead. "Missed the boat from Southampton, didn't I?" he said, abashed. "They went wivout me."

"The phrase 'missed the boat' could well sum up your short but unhappy life," the man said with apparent sadness.

Scanlon looked dazed. "Are you gonna take back the order," he growled, "or do I have to blow your brains across the book case?"

"My brains are staying where they will do me the most good. Now tell me, how did you open the door?"

"What?" Scanlon said, frowning.

"Did you notice a slight resistance when you twisted the doorknob? A click, perhaps." He smiled. "A pain in the palm of your hand?"

The gun wavered as Scanlon raised his left hand and gazed at it in bewilderment, then turned it to show the man behind the desk. A small spot of blood had smeared across the callouses.

"You should have pulled the knob out slightly before you turned it," the man continued calmly. "I tell you this in the sure knowledge that it will do you no good at all. The poison is already coursing through your veins. Can you feel it burning? Palytoxin, extracted from the coral *Palythoatoxia*, found in the tide pools of a Pacific island known as Hawaii. The local people call it *limu-makeuhana* – the deadly seaweed of Hana – although it is not seaweed. I obtained a specimen from a Chinese colleague. I must say, I am not at all happy about how slowly it works."

During the monologue, Scanlon's eyes had turned up until he was staring at the ceiling. He swayed slightly. The man behind the desk watched his right hand carefully, in case a sudden muscular spasm jerked the trigger.

Scanlon's fingers relaxed and the revolver slipped from his fingers, hitting the carpet with a soft thud. Seconds later, Scanlon joined it.

"I will deal with the rest of your unfaithful brethren shortly, wherever they have run to," the man murmured. Re-inking his quill, he picked up where he had left off, in the unsullied world of integrands and differential functions, dismissing Scanlon's cooling body from his mind.

There was silence for a while as the two medical men sat in the book-lined consulting room, each absorbed in his own thoughts.

"This simply will not do, Doyle," one of them said, throwing a manuscript onto the desk. The impact reverberated around the room, making the shadows cast by the gas-



lamps dance across the spines of the books.

Doctor Arthur Conan Doyle sighed. "Oh for Heaven's sake, James!" he snapped. "Are we going to go through this every time I write up your notes?"

"I would be the first to admit," James said, sighing, "that you have a gift for turning my mundane notes into deathless prose, full of adventure and excitement. I have trouble recognising myself in this heroic figure of Doctor John Watson that you have created. Even when we were both at medical school together, I could see that your future lay in literature, not the laboratory. The readers love these little adventures of ours, and, if we're lucky, we could turn a pretty penny from them."

"Well then," Doyle interrupted, "you have to –"

"But I cannot let you invent entire scenes! It must all be based on fact. This stuff here with the poisoned doorknob, for instance. Where on Earth did it come from?"

Doyle raised a hand to stroke his moustache. "The scene is implicit in your notes," he said defensively.

"Implicit my foot!" James exclaimed. "But the dastardly Moriarty must have been aware that his gang of ruffians were being spirited away somewhere."

"Indeed, but we never found out how. You have completely invented this scene. It'll have to go."

"I've added new material before, without you demurring," Doyle protested. "Look at *A Study in Scarlet* – more than half the book was invented by me. What was it that the critic of *The Graphic* said?" He scrambled through the papers on his

desk, scattering prescriptions and notes aside, until he found a well-thumbed magazine. "Yes, 'full of interest', he said. 'It hangs together well and finishes ingeniously', he said."

"I'm sorry, Doyle, but the answer is still no."

Doyle sighed theatrically. "Well, it's your adventure," he said.

His friend frowned slightly. "I've been waiting for you to ask how much of it actually happened," he said hesitantly. "Surely the story must have struck you as strange. Did you not think me unhinged?"

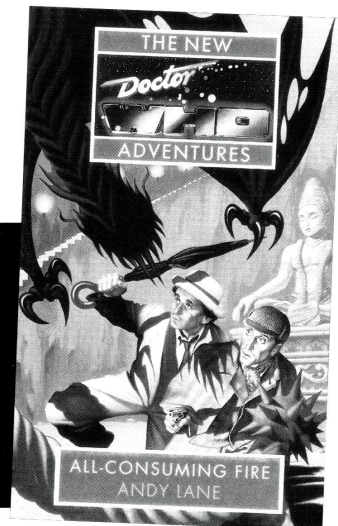
Doyle gazed out of the window at the rain-racked Portsmouth seafloor. The gaslight cast a ruddy glow across his face. "I once met a man who called himself the Doctor," he said. "Not quite as you described him, though. Tall. Curly hair. Staring eyes. If *your* Doctor was anything

like the one I met, then I could believe every word of your story. Does that make sense?"

There was a long silence, then his friend nodded. "It does," he said. "Can I ask . . . what adventures did *you* have with the Doctor?"

Doyle shivered. "Perhaps another time," he said.

Andy Lane



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Andy Lane
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Prelude

Blood Harvest

Chicago 5th December 1933

A clear cold winter's night with fine snow drifting upon the air. A little group of men stood outside a modest three-storey house in a quiet residential street just off Dearborne Avenue. Lights glowed behind curtained windows and a soft throb of jazz came from inside.

The men were staring at the open door – or rather at the space just above. Suddenly there was a crackle of electricity and a discreet sign lit up. In neat red neon letters it read: 'Doc's Place'. A ragged cheer went up from the little crowd.

Three men stood at the front of the group. One was enormous, another just very big. The third man, older than the others was slim and silver-haired.

The biggest of the three men, who looked like a gorilla in evening dress, said "Legit at last – and it only took a few years! Doc was right,

hey Luigi?"

"Doc was right about most things, Happy," said the silver-haired man.

"He sure was," said the third man quietly. Unlike the first two, immaculate in their tuxedos, he wore a rumpled blue suit and an ancient trench-coat. A battered fedora was jammed on the back of his head.

The silver-haired man stared at the sign for a moment and then raised his voice. "Very well, gentlemen, your first drink is on the house."

"That's tonight only," roared the gorilla-like man. "Tomorrow you mugs gotta pay up as usual." There was another cheer, and most of the crowd rushed into the house. The three men lingered for a moment, looking at the sign.

The big man said "It's a nice sign, Luigi, real class. Doc would've liked it."

The silver-haired man looked pleased. "Thank you, Mr Dekker. I'd better get inside, help my barmen hand out those free drinks."

He hurried into the house, and the other two

followed. In the luxurious hallway, the massive Happy went to close the door. Dekker said, "Leave it open, Happy. Come one, come all!"

"Hey, that's right!" Happy Harrigan shook his head wonderingly. He pointed to the little shutter, set head-high in the door. "No more looking at the suckers through the shutter, nobody giving the password 'I'm sick, I wanna see the Doc.' It don't seem natural."

Dekker said "You'll get used to it Happy. Watch the door all the same. No drunks, no troublemakers."

"Sure thing, Mr Dekker."

Dekker went down the hallway and into the bar. He went up to the bar, sat on his usual stool and lit a cigarette. Luigi put a Bourbon in front of him, and he sat drinking and smoking and staring into space. Remembering.

Angry voices brought him out of his reverie. The place was crowded by now, with people fighting for seats and places at the bar. The air was thick with smoke, and the noise of excited voices almost drowned-out the jazz combo. Above all the racket he heard a customer yelling at a frightened waiter. "I tell you I'm gonna sit right there. It's empty, ain't it?"

He was pointing at an empty alcove to the right of the bar.

The waiter said "Excuse me, sir, you don't understand –"



The customer, a burly, flashily-dressed, blue-chinned character, shoved him aside.

Dekker sighed, slid off his stool and moved across to the front of the alcove barring the customer's way. "The seat in the alcove's reserved."

"Yeah? Says who?"

Dekker studied the man for a moment before replying. The man wore a cheap tux with a bulge under the left arm. A stranger. Out of town hood, thought Dekker, Detroit or Cleveland, maybe even New York. A lot of new talent was moving into Chicago now the Big Fellow had been put away at last.

"Says me," said Dekker wearily, answering the question.

"And who the hell are you?"

"The name's Dekker. Tom Dekker."

The hood shifted uneasily under Dekker's hard stare. He was deciding whether or not to push it. To help him make up his mind, Dekker unbuttoned his jacket, letting the guy see the butt of the Colt .45 automatic under his arm. The handle of the Colt was worn and shiny. It had seen a lot of use.

The man licked his lips. "You a cop?"

"Private. And the seat's still reserved."

Dekker saw the anger flare in the man's eyes, saw his right hand twitch and realised he was going to go for it. He tensed and a huge man with a round, red face stepped between them.

"And just what might be going on here?"

Dekker said "Evening, Captain Reilly, nice to see you. I was just explaining to our friend that the alcove's reserved."

Captain Dennis Reilly of Chicago's finest said irritably "To be sure it is, everyone knows that." He glared at the hood.

"That seat's reserved for Doc, the guy who started this place. A personal friend of mine. So beat it!" He jabbed a finger as thick as a banana in the stranger's chest. The hood staggered back

and disappeared into the crowd. Reilly said "I suppose we oughta be patient with the poor feller, he's new in town. He'll learn."

"If he lives."

Reilly said "Ah sure, there's always that. Is Doc back in Chicago?"

"Not that I know of. He's – travelling."

"Great guy, that Doc. Those were the days, hey Dekker?"

"Sure were," Reilly had once tried to kill Doc and Dekker back in those good old days, but he obviously didn't bear any malice.

Reilly sighed. "And now Prohibition's over and booze is legal again. How's a poor corrupt police captain to make a living?" He nodded and moved away and Dekker went back to his stool. Luigi put another Bourbon in front of him. "I was getting ready to duck. We're never going to make a profit if you keep shooting the customers, Mr Dekker."

"It's lucky Reilly broke it up. He asked if Doc was back." Dekker lit another cigarette and sipped his drink, remembering a time, not so long ago, when booze was illegal, Capone

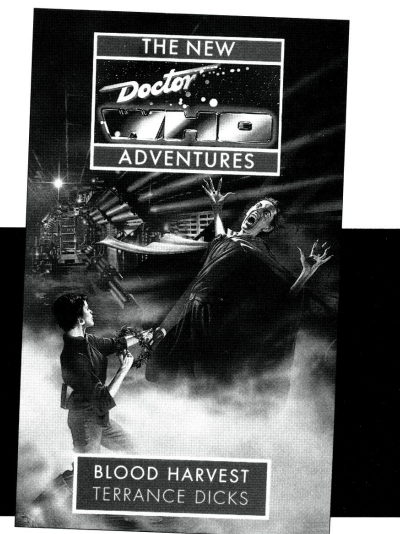
ruled Chicago, and the sound of bombs and Tommy-guns was as routine as the roar of traffic. He remembered a small grey-eyed man known as Doc and a deadly, dark-haired girl they called the Lady in Black. Luigi was polishing a glass. "You think he'll ever come back to Chicago, Mr Dekker? Him and Miss Ace?"

"Beats me, Luigi." Tom Dekker glanced at the empty alcove and raised his glass. "But if he does, his usual chair will be waiting for him..."

Terrance Dicks



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Prelude

STRANGE ENGLAND

AD1867, Scotland

It was dusk in Edinburgh. A red light bled into the city and its imposing castle. There was a weight in the light, as if particles of the sun were digging in, refusing to be dragged down below the horizon. People on the streets blinked and stared up, feeling the unwavering gaze of that ancient, burning eye. Somehow, the impressive architecture of the city seemed a fitting monument, a symbol of the power and majesty of the light now sinking into oblivion.

The Doctor shook his head. He locked the door of his laboratory and made his way out of the hospital. It was impossible not to be moved by the contrast of city and sun but there was no need to be fanciful or maudlin. He placed his black hat onto his head and walked towards Rose Street. It was an important day, no wonder he was seeing significance in every little occurrence. He realised his heart was beating hard, a physical response to his emotional state. One day he might find the connection. One day...



"Doctor, Doctor!" came a voice from behind.

The Doctor turned and saw the clumsy shape of Cameron running breathlessly after him. The young doctor was large and sweating. Around them, in the Grass Market, traders and beggars were giving up for the day, making room for Edinburgh's busy nightlife. The galls, black and impressive, were burned into a silhouette by the sun's fading light.

"Patrick!" wheezed Cameron, catching up with him. Doctor Rix stood quietly whilst the other leaned against him, snatching air back into his lungs. At last, he could speak again. "I couldn't let you go without wishing you good luck, old man."

Rix smiled. He had been so wrapped up in the events of the day that he had not realised that others might want to share his good fortune. It was only Christian to accept the good will of others.

"Thank you, Cameron," he said, "but nothing has happened yet. At least, I think not."

Cameron looked a little sheepish. "It is to be today, though?"

Rix nodded and put his arm round the large man's shoulders. "Yes, today. Please, come with me. It would be selfish of me to keep the birth of my first child a joy all to myself."

"And your wife?"

"She had some pains this morning. I was worried but have complete faith in Doctor Mackendrick. He is reputed to be the best."

Rix led Cameron up the stone steps that led up and round the castle. They did not need to go that way but again he could not help wanting to put meaning and weight into his actions. The castle provided a solemn backdrop to the day and its importance as a landmark in his life. Unfortunately, it meant Cameron would be out of breath again, very soon.

Rix looked out over the city, past the long finger that was Princess Street, trying to imagine what was occurring in his small house somewhere below. Out to sea he could make out a small, struggling merchant ship, sails billowing in the breeze. He felt relaxed up here. The scenery was a pattern, a design, a reassurance that God was keeping order in the world. He felt lucky, special. He hoped it was a boy.

Cameron huffed and puffed beside him. Rix led him down the steps and into the park. Red-faced, mopping his brow with a handkerchief, his friend said "I heard your lecture yesterday."



Very interesting."

"If it's a boy, I shall call him Stephen. A girl... I don't know."

"Medicine and Morality," Cameron continued. "Never thought of it like that before. Thought we just cut people's legs off most of the time."

Rix allowed himself the distraction despite the urge to break into a sprint and get back home. "We need a philosophy, Cameron. Otherwise, how are we to progress? We must consider ourselves spiritual healers as well as physical ones."

Cameron shrugged and Rix realised that his friend had not understood the point of the lecture. Like most doctors he was incapable of seeing the implicit connection between the physical and spiritual. It was not enough simply to stitch problems up. Body and mind were not separate, they were one, they had to be treated as one.

He knew he was right but aware also that his thinking was incomplete, he was searching in the dark for the truth. "I am very interested in the developments with ether made by some of our colleagues," Rix said, trying to make a link with Cameron, something he might understand. "We must tender science with mercy. Be aware of patients as human beings. If we treat the spiritual results of pain and illness as well as the physical then perhaps we are approaching the goal of making both mind and body healthy. I am convinced that if one is damaged then the other suffers."

Cameron stopped and smiled. "Please excuse me Patrick. I am sure you don't want to spend the day explaining your theories to an old fool like me. Come on, let's get you home."

They crossed to Rose Street and headed for the house. Too excited to search for the keys, Rix feverishly rang the bell. He barely noticed

that Cameron was also caught up in the tension. He was hopping from foot to foot, dabbing at his sweating brow. It was now almost dark.

At last the door was opened. It was the maid, Kathy. Rix noticed she was crying. His heart sped up again, his hands tightening into fists. He felt sick and dizzy. "What is it?" he asked. "What's wrong?"

Kathy's freckled face remained downturned. She was unable to look at him. It felt to Rix as if a black dagger was piercing his body. He willed himself not to think the worst.

"Patrick..." Cameron said, but Rix was in and dashing up to the bedroom. Upstairs, the sound of a crying baby rang faintly round the house.

Kathy collapsed into Cameron's arms and he held her as she sobbed, not knowing what else to do. He struggled to hear what might be happening.

He heard the voice of an old man, presumably Doctor Mackendrick, say "Patrick, she

went peacefully." Another scream from the baby and then silence. Cameron dropped his head, tears piercing his eyes. The maid sobbed against him.

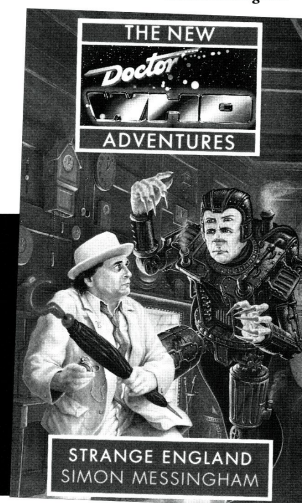
"My boy?" came Rix's anguished, hopeless voice.

"Patrick it was..." said Mackendrick.

Then a scream, this time from Rix. Cameron closed his eyes as he heard the desperate, lost words. "His legs! Oh God!" The house became silent.

Simon Messingham

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Prelude

FIRST FRONTIER

The cold stiffness was a meaningless feeling until Finney realised that it was the sensation of snowflakes freezing themselves to his face. He opened his eyes with some difficulty, blinking against the icy wind that drove in through both the shattered windscreen and a large rip in the Skytrain's fuselage just behind him. Everything seemed skewed, the curtain to the cargo compartment sagging towards the wall while the co-pilot was hanging limply above him.

Straightening himself in the canted cockpit, Finney realised that he could hear no sound from the cargo compartment. "Jim?" he prompted the co-pilot. There was no answer. "Lieutenant Mitchell!" he croaked, hoping to provoke a response. There was none, and Finney finally allowed himself to see the scarlet icicles that stretched out to him like grasping claws from Mitchell's nose and mouth. The co-pilot's yoke was jammed into his chest, the flight jacket there crumpled and thickly spread with frozen blood.

Another piece of him dying, Finney tried to reach out to him, to reassure him that everything would be fine and his family would be proud of him. But he couldn't, for the words would be as empty as his heart, or the lives of the family's.

Weakly, Finney scraped at the release for his harness. It popped free at last, but he found that he still couldn't move, though he wanted little more than to get out from under the accusing gaze of the corpse above him. Looking to see what was holding him back, Finney almost passed out again with shock. His left leg was a scarlet block like a frozen side of beef, nailed to the inside of the fuselage by a jointed throttle-cable support that was rammed through his thigh. The blood around it was solid and glassy, the sub-zero temperatures having stopped the flow, but having also numbed his body so much that he couldn't even feel the wound.

Shaking with more than just the cold, Finney retreated into himself, watching the snow as the flakes were tinted gold by some

minor fires on the starboard wing. He wasn't sure whether to be afraid of the danger of an explosion, or delighted that it would end it all. The light seemed steady, however, or perhaps pulsing softly along with the howling wind.

Perhaps he was already dead, he thought. Wasn't Dante's innermost circle of Hell a frozen wasteland embedded with lost souls? He didn't want to die so far from home, and more alone than anyone in the world...

"Watch the door, there," a breathless voice seemed to say somewhere in the depths of the howling wind. "It doesn't look at all steady."

"Aye, I'm not blind, you know."

"Well, the snow is rather thick," the first voice replied tardily.

"We do get snow in the Highlands, ye know."

Finney's eyes, almost welded shut, cracked open again. Those voices weren't hallucinations surely? There were two people back there, he was sure. It sounded like an Englishman and a Scotsman, which meant they were probably from the British 41 Commando; they were attached to the 5th US Marines at Hagar, weren't they? "There's nothing we can do for these poor men," the first voice went on. "They must have died instantly."

Finney tried to call to the men, but no sound would come from his raw throat. Fortunately,



however, footsteps approached the bulkhead behind him, and a head popped through the tilted doorway. The green eyes at the heart of the lined face, which was topped with a limp mop of dark hair, glanced quickly over the body of the co-pilot, and onto Finney. Summoning all his reserves of strength, Finney mouthed a silent thanks, and weakly beckoned the newcomer over.

His eyes widening, the new arrival climbed gingerly into the cockpit, stepping carefully over Finney to stand on the side window. The stranger didn't wear any uniform, however, but a very bulky fur coat, while his companion was wrapped up in a sheepskin jerkin, and courageously wearing a kilt despite the weather. "Oh dear," the stranger announced, "you are in trouble aren't you?" He craned over to examine the dark mass of Finney's leg. "We'll have to do something about that," he added, searching around in the bulky coat before drawing out a narrow metal object.

The kilted youth looked at the wound, grimacing slightly. "He's lucky it's cold enough," he commented in a Scots burr.

"Yes, if it wasn't so chilly, he'd have bled to death," the strange Englishman agreed. Finney tried to look towards his leg, feeling a strange warm tingling in it. There was a hollow tugging sensation. "Ah, this was the problem," the stranger exclaimed, holding up the cable support. "Very nasty."

Yellow lights flickered outside, and the Scot looked out of the two small panes set into the ceiling, which was now a wall. "Somebody's coming, Doctor," he pointed out. "They've a big red cross on their wagon."

"Excellent. We can leave this poor chap in the care of the professionals." He hopped back over the slumped Finney, pocketing the slim metal object. Finney felt something pressed into his stiff palm. "A souvenir," the stranger murmured with an infectious smile. "Come on, Jamie. Zoe will be worried about us by now; if she's noticed we're gone..." Finney watched as the two strangers disappeared into the darkness at the rear of the plane, their voices swallowed up by the howling wind.

Somewhere far beyond the fragile shell of atmosphere that sheathed the Earth, adrift in infinite darkness, a razor-edged blade gleamed. Its point hanging directly towards the small blue planet in its path, the starship slid back into normal space as easily as the sword it resembled would slide into flesh. The desert skies were clear enough that one could almost see the texture of the inky darkness between the stars. An echoing howl rippled across the stippled landscape as a pair of jets banked around the Proving Grounds off in the distance, but Coyote Eyes – or so his name translated into English – ignored the aircraft. The planes had been criss-crossing the land long enough for him to know their sound and their every possible image.

It wasn't the aircraft or the rockets that had persuaded him to pack his small suitcase. "Look," Jack Siegel cajoled, "I know you've some vacation time due, but can't it wait until Rick has moved to his own place? With so many of us to cook for..."

"I could still cook for you – if you came away from here also." Coyote Eyes gestured skywards with a strong but gnarled hand. "If you're smart, you'll move away from this area for a couple of weeks at least." Jack looked upwards, but saw nothing other than a gently pulsing light that he thought could be a

plane or a meteor.

"It is not safe here," Coyote Eyes went on. "The skies are giving us warning. Jack. Soon, Nayenezgani – Slayer of Alien Gods – and Tobadzistini – Child of the Water, the brothers of light and darkness will walk the earth. The flying demons – anaye – already own the skies. Those lights that you see..." Coyote Eyes tossed his luggage into his battered '48 pickup. The old Navajo cook fixed the rancher with a calm, matter-of-fact look. "You should all leave. But, if you must stay, then protect yourselves – they may come for you; the Slayer of Alien Gods, and perhaps the poison woman."

"Poison...?"

"To sleep with her is death. It is a legend of the lost ones, the Anasazi." The old man climbed into the driver's seat. "I'll be back in a couple of weeks – if there's anything to come back to."

David A. McIntee



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PRELUDE

St. Anthony's Fire

Somewhere, mammals were howling. Their throaty cries carried up the dusty summer streets of Jurrula like banshee wails, echoing off the walls of the great Temple and the surrounding streets. Light glittered off every surface, rippling the air into hot waves.

Portrone Grek lay on his bed, scratching his snout, stubbornly refusing to have anything to do with the rest of the day.

Bored and restless, he had spent the morning polishing the scales of his crest and removing specks of dust from his uniform. Around noon with, yet again, no orders to advance, he had stripped off and lain on his bed in the barracks, his warty green-grey hide bathed in sweat. If only *something* would happen.

There had been times like this before, of course; times of endless, nervous waiting. In the trenches of the West he had spent his first hours as an Ismetch officer continually vomiting, so profound was his fear of action. Grek smiled now as sunlight poured dustily through the blinds of the barrack room window. He could never have imagined he'd eventually become so blasé about it all.

As Grek turned on his side, the door opened and Maconsa shuffled inside. Older than Grek, there was a suggestion of weariness in his gait and the curve of his shoulders. Few had served so long and so well.

"Anything?" muttered Grek without opening his bulbous blue eyes.

Maconsa pulled off his tunic and sighed. "Not a thing. Intelligence reports the Cutch

heading for the jungles, up river. But there hasn't been a single sighting. It's driving me mad."

Grek could feel himself drifting into sleep. He opened his snout. The inside of his mouth felt thick and dry. "Where's Ran?" he croaked.

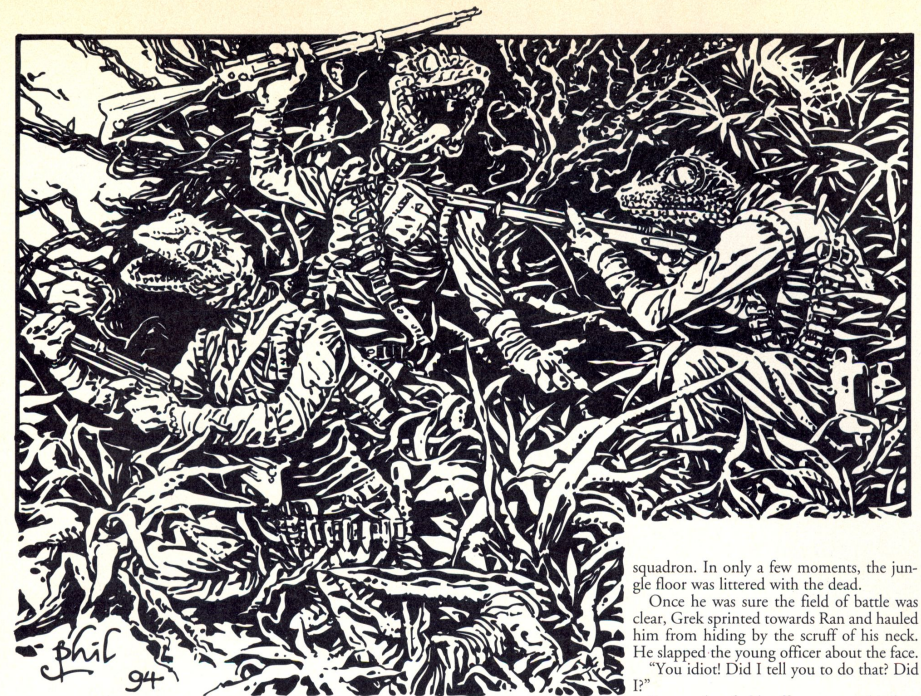
Maconsa had dug out a basin of water and was splashing his hot hide. "Gone to Temple, would you believe?"

Grek smiled. "He always gets religious before a battle."

"Hmm," agreed Maconsa. "Trouble is, this one's been postponed so much he goes to Temple every day. The elders think he wants to sign up," Grek laughed in a high scattato. Maconsa opened the blind and squinted at the blast of light. He ran his long black tongue absently over the wet orbs of his eyes.

With a crack like gunfire, the door burst open and the young officer, Ran, almost fell into the room.

"Sir! Sir!" he babbled, looking excitedly from Grek to Maconsa.



"All right, Ran. Keep calm. What is it?"

Ran's face was suffused with excitement. "It's on, sir. The Cutch have been seen!"

Grek sat up and swung his legs over the edge of the bed. "Where?"

"Delurida Bridge, Portrone," gasped Ran, wiping the glutinous white sweat from his crested head.

"Delurida Bridge?" murmured Maconsa. "That's in the dip of that valley, you know."

"Yes, yes," said Grek excitedly, pulling on his tunic. "If we can trap them in the valley and cut off their retreat, then we've got 'em."

The three Ismetch officers beamed delightedly and hurried from the room.

Grek flung himself to the ground as a Cutch bullet whistled over his head. Maconsa and Ran were crouched low in the hollow roots of one of the great trees which covered the jungle perimeter. Both were breathing heavily; tense with adrenalin rush.

"All right," said Grek quietly. "We know where they are. Tobess has got the other end sealed off. We've got to get them out in the open."

He looked about in the gloomy undergrowth, just able to make out the rest of his concealed squadron, their rifles poking through clusters of heavy, wet vegetation.

Maconsa peered into the jungle towards the old stones of Delurida Bridge, the water over which it had been built long-since vanished. "We need a diversion. Something to bring them out. If they're as jumpy as us..."

Grek's scalp contracted in affirmation. "Yes. They'll go for the first thing that moves."

He looked again at the rifle barrels, all pointed towards where the Cutch had holed

themselves up. They had almost opened fire on their own relief column, such was the tension. Insects chirruped incessantly in the oppressive silence. Ran glanced over at his senior officers, sat up on his haunches and then pelted across the jungle, waving his arms and screaming at the top of his voice.

Grek lurched forward to stop him. "Ran, you -"

At once, the Cutch rifles exploded into activity. Grek's squadron responded in kind, blasting through the undergrowth with furious precision. Ran threw himself to the ground, rolled over and hid behind a tree.

Maconsa whipped out his own rifle and bellowed "Here they come!" The Cutch suddenly tore from behind the bridge, their reptilian faces obscured by the smoke of their guns.

"Fire! Fire!" screeched Grek. The Ismetch squadron emerged from hiding and ruthlessly mowed the enemy down. Trapped in the narrow basin of the valley, the Cutch force soon succumbed to the superior Ismetch

squadron. In only a few moments, the jungle floor was littered with the dead.

Once he was sure the field of battle was clear, Grek sprinted towards Ran and hauled him from hiding by the scruff of his neck. He slapped the young officer about the face. "You idiot! Did I tell you to do that? Did I?"

Ran made a feeble effort to cover his face. "No sir."

Suddenly Grek burst out laughing. "Good lad. Well done. You've got initiative."

He slapped the bemused Ran on the back and propelled him towards Maconsa.

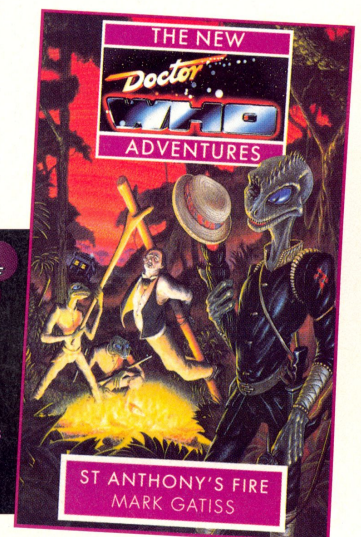
"What do you say, Maconsa? We'll make a Portrone of this one yet."

The future was to prove Grek right, but he was not then to know how far his own destiny was linked to that of certain visitors. Visitors countless eons away from the humble planet of Betrushia.

Mark Gatiss

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St. Anthony's Fire

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PRELUDE

Falls the Shadow

The butterfly stirs on the forest floor. Its precisely-coloured wings twitch. Soon they will thrash. There will be a storm, the promise of death.

Five years ago.

The world swaying back and forth, upside-down. Everything I see comes blurred and in bursts. A thin black strap holds me in my topsy-turvy, out-of-focus, fragmented world.

- Torn metal sculpted into new, crumpled shapes.

- Fire burning, black charred patches, intense stench of burning.

- Flesh too, cold and fragile, red-wet.

- A woman screaming ceaselessly, hysterical fingers scrabbling at her eyes.

Automata in green overalls are cutting into my metal-flesh. They take slices from the door, carefully working through the layers towards my soft heart. Blood (hydraulic fluid?) pounds through my skull, headache-pressure making it difficult to think. My legs (rear wheels?) feel distant and empty, the bone sucked out. I can see a face through my smashed windscreen-eye. Something has happened to me. Something car-tumbling,

fence-ripping, tree-smashing, glass-flying, ending-in-a-ditch bad.

There is blood falling from my mouth.

There are screams.

There is death in the air.

And I smile, my head-lamps shining full-on through the gloom, smiling and shining because I understand, because I know what I must do.

Yesterday.

The man was waiting on a balcony, hands gripping at the rusted railing, head turned towards the city. He was an indeterminate man, neither tall nor short, fat nor thin, young nor old. Everything about him was elusive, nothing definite. He was superbly ambivalent.

Mirabilis loved him. She prayed to him in secret, hoping to catch a sign of his love. She held back, watching him in silence. He knew she was there. He knew why.

"I'm happy to see you, Mirabilis," he said, his voice smooth and undisturbed. "Join me."

She stepped forward graciously to join her lord and maker on the balcony, her cloven hooves clacking against the worn stone floor.

"It's the Set that brings you here, as ever?" He half-turned his head, as if distracted, as if anything could distract him. His eyes were hidden beneath black glass, which was a comfort, Mirabilis smiled, both grateful and ashamed.

"They keep me occupied; I would come otherwise," She sighed. "Yes, I've a message. It concerns the gauging of the arcana."

"I wish the Set would not put so much trust in statistics. They're not truths, merely indicators . . . They would have me fight, you know?"

Mirabilis nodded grimly and spoke without feeling.

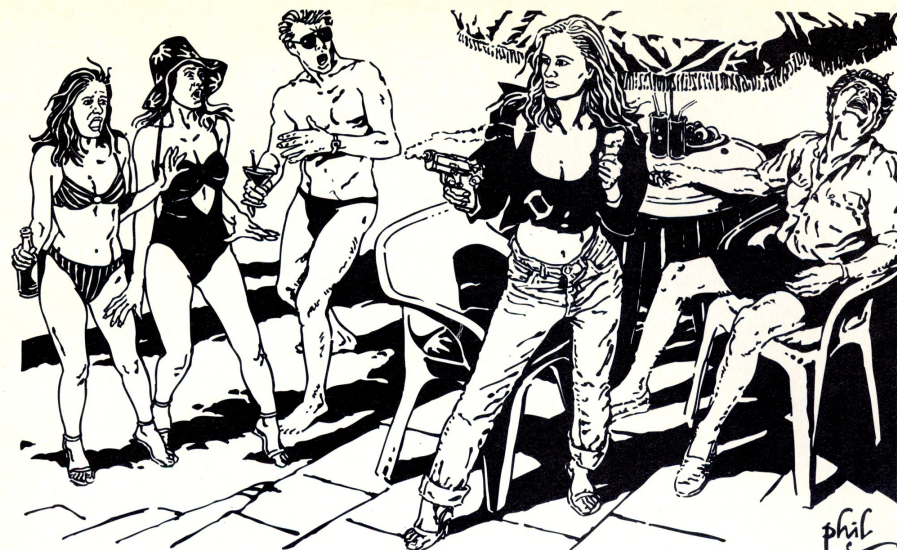
"Three of the minor arcana are flooded, M'Sire. Entropy consumes them."

"I am not your M'Sire, Mirabilis, please don't title me such."

"It pleases me," Mirabilis whispered slyly, continuing in a calmer, louder voice. "The Ace of Swords is besieged. And of the major arcana, the World is flooding."

Her lord started, staring upwards to meet her gaze.

"That is disturbing," he said. His face had grown weary and lined. Mirabilis moved closer, close enough to feel the cold from his body.



"The message is this: *These agents grow fullshaped, and their power touches the world. Negative they are, programme-threatening with their corruption. Demand that you seek them out, that you root them out, we do.*"

"Fools," the man spoke without kindness. "They ask that you be reminded of the war with the Snake."

"Yes . . . You weren't made when we fought the Eldest Shadow, Mirabilis. We fought it to the walls, no further. We fought it because it was us, and we were our enemy. Never has such a narcissistic war been waged! Fight? No. Not for the Set. I might better beat upon the gates of the forbidden city, demanding the return of my throne." He shrugged, offering her a weary sigh. "Tell the Set I will go, look, and then decide what must be done."

Mirabilis made a curt nod of her head and spoke softly.

"M'Sire is wise."

Perhaps he laughed then. Perhaps he kissed her as he swept away, grey coat whipping into the darkness. Whatever, she found herself alone, nodding sagely and trying not to cry.

Death's Dream Republic.

It's a fine summer day, she's sitting at a table at a pavement cafe overlooking the sea. There are people milling round her, young people with lithe or muscular torsos, dressed so briefly that she seems well-covered in just jeans and jacket. She's wearing something under her arm and it's hurting her, chafing her flesh and making it sore. It's the truth that keeps her separate from the cattle, the sheep, the abattoir-bound herd around her. They're clad in their ignorance, not knowing what is coming for them on a pale horse (but we don't have *myth* here, thank-you!).

Last week she burned a church in Liechtenstein. She poured petrol on a corpse she had made and set light to it. She burned the half-naked god gloating on his cross. She locked the doors on the way out. They were screaming inside and she called "You're going to die! You're going to die!" Someone beat her up then. Men in uniforms with

sticks. She wears no uniform. Liechtenstein was a bad time for her, there's a buzzing in her head now and she feels nauseous and tastes the blood again. She sees a couple kissing at the next table. That will end. They deceive themselves with their tongues and their lips and their flesh which will - which must - rot. There's Jack sitting beside her telling her about the man with no legs, in the house, in the north. There's graffiti on the wall behind him: WELCOME TO INTER-ZONE. EVERYTHING IS PERMITTED. What a waste of precious freedom, I fought in the revolution for them! There's an ice-cream cone in her hand. She licks.

Jack knows the truth but doesn't care. He's been made cynical by his methods and his fortune. She cares. She's made her people free. She didn't betray her love. There are no labels in her clothes, no name tags, she is as anonymous as I am.

Will this be your first time since Europe? Jack asks. No, she tells him, the second. She stands up now, taking the heavy thing from under her shoulder and pointing it and, with a gesture, she makes a hole in him. He falls back and people start to scream. Now, turn and walk away. She had shown them the truth and made them afraid. And the truth is this: I am she and she is me, and I decide to give myself a name now. I haven't been *Jane* before. I will become *Jane*.

Jane dances an impromptu hopscotch

pattern along the seafront, cone in one hand, gun in the other, leaving behind her a body, a token of death.

The butterfly's wings twitch. A boot stamps down on it, crushing it into the forest floor. "Doctor!" a woman calls. "You're going the wrong way!"

"Wrong way? Me, go the wrong way? If everywhere leads somewhere then, logically, there can be only one path, and that path is the right way . . . hmm? Isn't that right, K9?"

"Geographical paradox not demonstrated, Master. You have said, 'all places are one, and that place is very big.'"

"I have? How clever of me! Anyway, this way!"

He moves away, leaving behind him a crushed butterfly, the promise of death.

Daniel O'Mahony



Doctor Who -
The New Adventures
Falls the Shadow

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Prelude

PARASITE

It begins in silence.

With nothing.
 Not matter, not energy, not time, not feeling or intelligence.
 Nothing.
 Then in the immeasurably small fraction between what had been and what would be – a change. Something new.
 A birth.
 The Birth – of everything.
 Chaos becomes ordered. Elements are born. Hydrogen changes to helium.
 Microwaves burst out, attain a smooth configuration.
 The universe is born.
 Energy changes into matter. Gravity is born. Matter accretes into lumps. The lumps grow. With matter and energy comes change. Time is born. Time defines the infant universe.
 And memory defines time.
We were born five thousand million years ago.
 The lumps grow, attain form, helices.
 Life is born.

*I have lived so long and moved so much
 and held so many thoughts
 I find it difficult to remember
 whether the universe
 or myself happened first.*

Life grows, spreads out among the smooth microwaves, the infant matter and energy.

*Still, what's a few particles of Planck-time
 between friends?*

Life reaches out to itself, to the infant universe, still perfectly ordered and smooth.

*Energy was like a brightly coloured toy to us.
 We moved it around. Shaped it.
 Played with it.*

Energy brightens around Life, darkens in the new spaces between. Energy accretes to Life and forms into dense matter. The universe is no longer a smooth energy-state. Galaxies are born.

And then I got tired.

The galaxies grow and change. Suns form and then planets. The dark spaces between Life are wider now, and lacking in energy. But the bright galaxies of matter are warm and inviting.

*The universe was getting cold in places now
 all the energy had been moved around so
 I wrapped myself up in something warm,
 and waited. Soon I would give birth
 and then I would die.*

In the meantime I would sleep.

While Life sleeps, life is born.

The Gallifreyan awoke screaming from the first nightmare anyone of his race had experienced.

The first vision.

Not yet master of his own mind or body the Gallifreyan wept, for his vision was unique. He had discovered God. And God had terrified him.

To overcome his fear, the Gallifreyan would do anything, dare anything. He would learn, he would build. Ultimately he would destroy.

To conquer his own fear, the Gallifreyan would conquer all that was possible. Matter. Energy.

Time.

Only afterwards would he wonder if the thoughts, the memories of his vision had been real, or if he had simply imposed his own insecurities upon a simple moment of scientific genius.

Revelation or self-delusion?

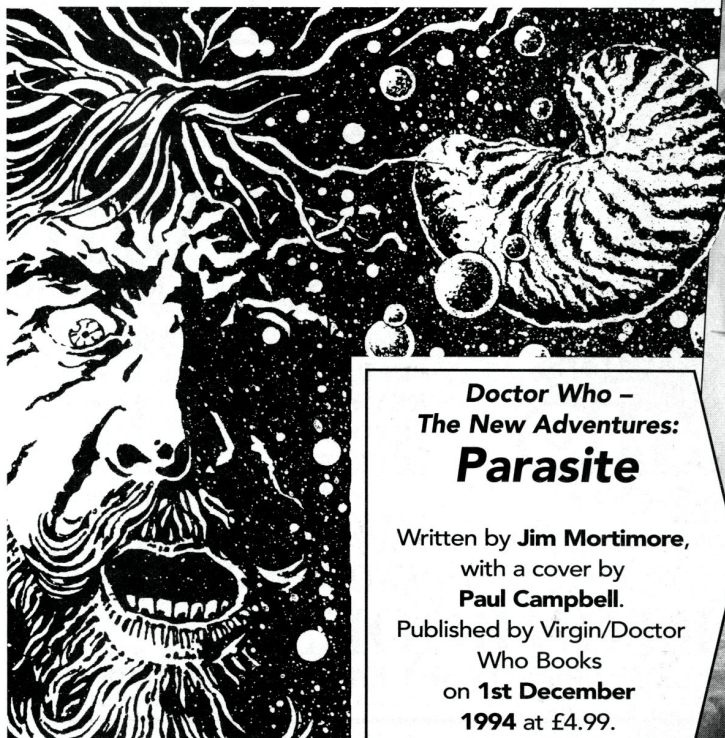
The answer had to exist.

Life had to exist.

He would leave his home and look for it.

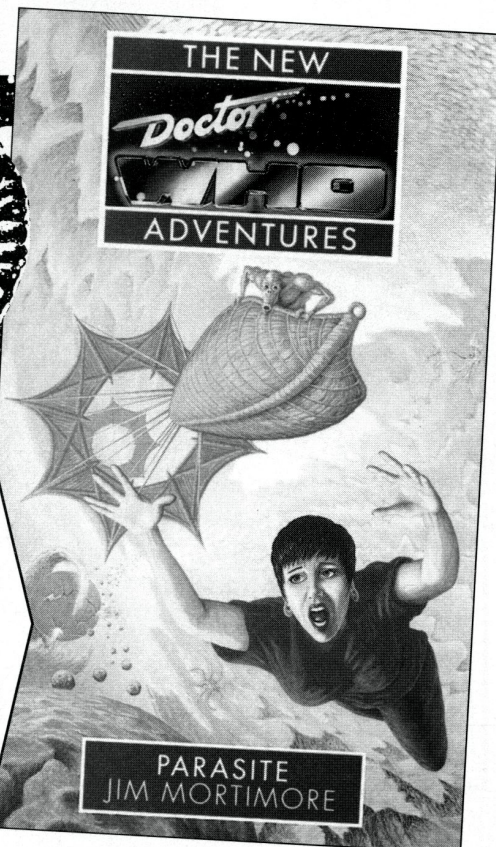
He would find it if it took him the rest of his lives.

Jim Mortimore.



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Paul Campbell.
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Prelude WARLOCK

It was an unseasonably hot autumn day. The sweat was running freely down Anatoly Marichev's forehead. It irritated the skin where his thin wire framed spectacles bit into his face. They were the same style of spectacles Trotsky had once worn.

Anatoly was crossing an overgrown meadow that skirted a belt of thick green forest. Grass seed simmered in the heat, tickling his nose as he breathed in the rich warm air. The woods here had been impenetrably thick until a natural catastrophe had thinned them in the latter

girl would creep out of the house in the early morning, returning to join Anatoly and himself for breakfast as if she had just dropped in after an early morning walk. Was that sharp old mind deceived? Anatoly doubted it.

Stepping into the cool garden of the white house, Anatoly turned a corner and found his grandfather carrying glasses of hot tea out. One of the glasses his grandfather handed to a small man sitting in the shadow of a blossoming tree.

The small man looked up. He was wiping his brow with a red handkerchief of some unusual material, but he seemed quite composed and serene in the heat.

In his lap was a straw hat. He wore a cream linen jacket of a slightly unusual cut. Altogether, thought Anatoly, he looks like an Englishman. An academic or intellectual of some kind — the small man's eyes had a piercing quality, as if a fierce intelligence was constantly shifting behind them, peering out and weighing up the world. In the shadow of the tree, with the smell of late blossom blowing through the garden, Anatoly found it oddly difficult to determine the colour of those eyes.

'This is my grandson,' said old Pietia, by way of introduction. 'But he looks old enough to be my son, observe the bags under his eyes. That is because of his joyless life. He is a relentless scholar. God knows how he ever found such a pretty girl. Still, he is very bright. Very like his father.' The old man frowned, a shadow crossing his face.

'That was a terrible thing,' said the Doctor.

'Yes. To lose a son is terrible. But millions suffered the same tragedy in those years.' The old man stirred his tea and looked sadly across at him. 'Do you really think they are foolish enough to begin another world war?'

'People keep asking me that question,' said the Doctor, sipping his tea.

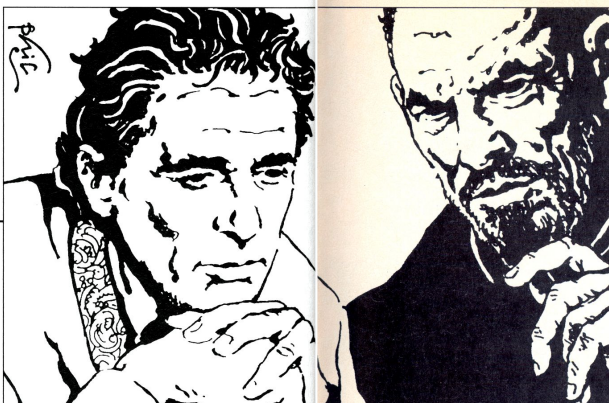
'You would think that one world war would be sufficient for anyone,' said old Pietia, shaking his head. 'How is your tea?'

'Delicious,' said the Doctor. 'And what a beautiful garden to drink it in.'

'This is a very fertile land. A meteor crashed here the year I was born. It was always a legend in our family. The explosion and ensuing fire were huge. The beautiful forest was scarred. Thousands of trees burned. But they grew back quickly. The whole area is fantastically fertile. The local saying is that the meteor ploughed the earth for us, bringing rich soil to the surface. Just think. A huge stone, falling from the sky to set the night on fire. They say all the horses in the area went mad. It must have been an extraordinary sight.'

'Loud, too,' said the Doctor, sipping his tea.

'Here,' said Anatoly. 'These are some of the mushrooms I gathered in the



woods today. The good eating ones.'

The Doctor opened the bag and inspected the mushrooms. 'They look delicious. Thank you Anatoly.' He glanced up from the bag. 'I believe I've read about a local delicacy called the toad-back.'

'They are not particularly good for eating.' Said Anatoly quickly. He had taken a sample out of his pocket where he'd kept it carefully wrapped in a clean handkerchief. Now he gave it to the Doctor. 'It was an odd looking mushroom. Its mottled cap had bright slashes of green and purple on it. And it gave off a pungent smell not unlike liquorice. The Doctor placed it carefully in his pocket. 'Thank you.' He got up from the garden chair and picked up his umbrella. 'I'd best be leaving now.'

'Must you go?'

'I'm afraid so. I have a train to catch.'

Pitia hopped to his feet. He took the Doctor's hand and shook it firmly as they crossed the lawn. 'Thank you for the warning, my old friend,' he whispered as they walked out of earshot of the boy. 'I will have to explain to him later. But I will convince him we must leave.'

'The sooner the better.'

Ludmilla Serbrennikov was a black haired beauty with level blue eyes that flashed behind a pair of round spectacles. The same sort of spectacles that Anatoly wore. When the couple kissed their glasses clattered together and had even been known to become entangled.

Ludmilla's gaze was deep and intense because she was hopelessly short sighted. In fact, without her glasses Anatoly knew this beautiful girl was as blind as a bat. He chuckled now as he thought about it.

'What?' said Ludmilla, touching his face. She had a soft husky voice that made Anatoly think of the kind of strong summer honey whose sweetness burned the tongue.

'Is that all you are taking, Anatoly?' She pointed with her toe at the small leather satchel that lay on the lawn beside her own knapsack.

'You should see Grandpa's bag. It's even smaller. He spent, I think, all of five minutes packing it.'

'It was very clever, keeping your savings in diamonds instead of gold.'

Anatoly knelt and opened his satchel. He took out what looked like a handful of milky pebbles. He offered the uncut diamonds to Ludmilla but she shook her head. 'Put them away, for heaven's sake.'

Anatoly casually poured the diamonds back into the bag and shut them in his satchel. 'More portable than gold,' he said. 'And just as effective as an international currency. Grandfather isn't dim.'

'None of your family are dim. But where is he? Is he ready to leave?'

Anatoly smiled. 'Pitia's ready. He's inside, saying goodbye to the house. Just killing time. We could have been gone hours ago but we had to wait for you, my chipmunk.'

'Where are your notebooks, Anatoly? I didn't see them in your satchel.'

'I left them in the laboratory.'

'But all your work is in them.'

'It is also in my head.'

There was a creak of wooden steps and old Pietia came out into the bright garden carrying a thin briefcase on a strap over one shoulder. He joined the young couple in the shade of the tree.

'Finished saying farewell to the house, Pietia?' Ludmilla smiled at the old man.

'Indeed. It took somewhat longer than I expected. I had to be thorough. It was a very fine house and our family has flourished in it.' The old man sighed. 'But now we must turn our face to new horizons, new adventures. The open road beckons.' He stared out towards the dusty road beyond the hedge. A look of concern suddenly crossed his face. 'It still baffles me who could have reported us to the government,' he said.

They all heard the distant clatter of approaching engines. On the road a car and a lorry were approaching, dust rising behind them in the warm autumn sunlight.

The truck rattled to a halt outside the house and its tailboard instantly swung down. Half a dozen soldiers tumbled out. They slapped dust from their clothes and reached back into the lorry where a seventh soldier handed rifles out to them. Anatoly and his grandfather stared in surprise as Ludmilla ran down to join them.

'There they are!' shouted Ludmilla, pointing. Anatoly and his grandfather turned to run and the soldiers raced off in pursuit, stumbling through the roadside trees, clutching their rifles. Ludmilla heard the familiar voice of the colonel ring out. 'Just four of you!'

The last three soldiers froze and turned reluctantly away from the chase. They came back across the lawn and returned to the lorry where they began to argue about unloading something.

'Will your men catch them?' asked Ludmilla.

'Of course we'll catch them,' said the colonel.

'We can go inside while we're waiting. I can show you the laboratory.'

'There is no need to see the laboratory,' said the colonel.

'Fine. Just detail two of your soldiers to me and I will arrange the packing of the equipment and notes.'

'That won't be necessary,' said the colonel. 'We have had a decision from the scientific specialists.'

'What specialists?' said Ludmilla. 'They know nothing about science.' She frowned with growing anger.

'In any case, they have not deemed your boyfriend's research sufficiently interesting.'

'Interesting? His research is brilliant.' 'Then perhaps it was your description

that was at fault.'

'But I made it perfectly clear. I can't believe those idiots don't see how important it is. Bureaucrats!'

'I'm afraid it is too late to express your views on this matter, comrade.' The colonel turned to face her. 'My orders are to burn the laboratory to the ground.'

'This is madness.'

'Perhaps. Or it might make perfect sense.' The colonel wouldn't meet her gaze. 'Perhaps the specialists feel some things are too dangerous to remain in existence.' He wouldn't look Ludmilla in the eye.

He squinted up at the bright blue autumn sky then turned and shouted at the three soldiers by the truck. They hurried across the garden and into the house. They were carrying large tins and Ludmilla could hear liquid slopping in them.

From the direction of the woods a sudden cry echoed through the dense green. The colonel smiled. 'We've got them.'

'At least let me take a few things from the laboratory,' said Ludmilla.

'Help yourself,' said the colonel, suddenly relaxed and jubilant. He was already hurrying over to the edge of the woods.

As soon as he was gone Ludmilla picked up Anatoly's satchel, abandoned when he had fled.

Ludmilla looked around. She took out the bag of diamonds and put them into her own knapsack. She swung it across one shoulder and hurried towards the house.

Indoors it was cool. Sunlight shone on the wooden floor of the veranda as she swept through it to the summer house and Anatoly's laboratory.

The hexagonal room stank of fumes, the soldiers were already splashing their tins of kerosene on the floorboards as Ludmilla hurried in. She began hastily scooping up the notebooks full of Anatoly's handwriting.

When she was certain she had all of them she scooped up a small tin box. The reek of kerosene drowned out the distinctive smell that normally lingered around the box.

She hurried out of the summerhouse, the soldiers smiling and nodding at her politely as they poured their kerosene. Now that she had everything under control Ludmilla felt relaxed and almost sleepy. All the important matters had been attended to.

When she went back out into the garden she saw Anatoly and old Pietia being made to kneel by the rose beds. She ignored them, turning away to look at

the burning house.

There was a sudden loud thud of combustion. Ludmilla watched the summerhouse go up explosively in flame. There were two gunshots from the garden but she hardly noticed them.

The house burned remarkably quickly. As the dry wooden walls caught black smoke began to pour into the air. Clouds of sparks showered down like red needles.

Ludmilla opened the small tin box she'd taken from the laboratory. A smell like liquorice arose powerfully into her face. The mushrooms inside the tin were dried but you could still make out the distinctive colourings, like a toad's back.

Andrew Cartmel



part of the 19th century. His grandfather had adventured in the woods as a boy and he still spoke of them as a fantastic haunted place.

Thin young trees were everywhere but occasionally Anatoly passed through a strip which had escaped the great fire, where huge trees hung thick and green with age. As he walked through them he felt the weight of these ancient woods, their slow vegetable indifference to mankind.

He adjusted the big burlap sack hanging from his belt. The sack was heavy and Anatoly felt a certain fierce pride.

At breakfast his grandfather had glanced up from his book — an account of Einstein's general theory of relativity — and had said disparaging things about Anatoly's talents as a mushroom hunter. But today's hunt had been a success. It was the best time of year for mushrooms in Russia.

Tonight he would prepare them for supper, perhaps just giving himself time to linger for a drink of brandy after the meal with his grandfather. They had yet to conclude their argument about Lysenko.

After their traditional argument he would say goodnight, the old boy would retire upstairs, and Anatoly would invite Ludmilla over.

His grandfather was too deaf to hear the metallic clamour that Anatoly's bed made when Ludmilla visited. Or too tactful. And the following morning he observed the absurd ritual whereby the



Doctor Who —
The New Adventures:

Warlock

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Prelude SET PIECE

Anyway, I was telling you why I quit my job at the café. You remember how I told you it wasn't there one day, but was the next? Well, weirder things happen in Glebe, and I needed some cash. And it was an easy job, just a couple of hours a night waiting tables. That was before I met the alien.

You'd like Sydney; lots more sunshine than Melbourne, though the humidity in summer is like being steamed. The evening I quit, we'd left the door open to let the breeze in. The café was full of Glebe types, mostly students. They're the easiest to wait on, they can make one cappuccino last all night.

I went out to the kitchen, through a pair of those little saloon doors, to pick up a tray for table twelve. That's when Mr. Yeadon grabbed me and pushed me up against the fridge, squashing the empty glasses I was carrying against my chest.

(You've probably seen Yeadon's picture in the paper – he's that English guy who's been buying up a lot of Sydney's Central Business District. He was nearly a foot taller than me. His black hair and black suit and black tie were really tidy, but his big green eyes looked like they belonged to a kid. The pupils were

shrunk down in the fluoro kitchen light. He looked like a total maniac.

"The alien on table three," he hissed. "How long has he been there?"

When I'd got my breath back and realised who he was and stuff, I twisted my head around and looked back out through the door. Table three was one of mine: an eggplant parmigiana and four glasses of orange juice, so far. He was a little man, but he wasn't green, and I wondered if Mr. Yeadon knew about the secret vodka bottle in the kitchen fridge. Either that or he'd been watching too much X-Files.

"A couple of hours," I said. One of the glasses had splashed Coke onto my shirt. "I thought maybe he was waiting for somebody. Do you know him?"

Yeadon had been staring out the door at the guy. His head snapped back around to me. "What makes you think I know him?"

"Um," I said, and "Um, well, you said he was an –"

"Alien?"

I nodded, trying not to drop the glasses.

"I bet you think I'm... But you weren't there. There's almost nobody alive who was there." He dropped me suddenly, but his big green eyes looked like they belonged to a kid. The pupils were

I put the glasses down, and then I



thought what if Yeadon was going to strangle the little guy or something? I peeked over the top of the doors, but he was just standing there, next to the table, being ignored. The little man had been doodling on a big notepad all night, and he just kept right on doodling.



It was then I remembered he'd been writing down mathematical symbols, equations or something. Maybe Yeadon wanted his plans for the flying saucer engine. Whatever. I just had to know.

I fed table twelve and went back to the kitchen the long way, via table three, just in time to hear the little man say "I wouldn't have expected to find you in a place like this."

"I own it," said Mr. Yeadon.

"And half of Sydney," said the little guy, "or so I hear. You've come a long way since Crook Marsham."

"She could have been my wife," said Yeadon. "Mrs Dorothy Yeadon. Do you have any idea how much I'm worth?"

I picked up the little man's empty glass and messed about with the tray and things, so they wouldn't realise I was eavesdropping. "Well," he said, putting down his pen. "Do you cry when you hear *Imagine*?"

Neither of us had any idea what he was talking about. "Not even when you're driving by yourself, late at night?"

Mr. Yeadon shook his head.

"Not much, then."

"What?"

"You got through the Sixties without a scratch. Watching Mick Jagger get old. Wondering how you could be that rich."

"After all those monsters, I wanted solid things," said Mr. Yeadon. His voice was a whisper, and I wondered if I should ask if he wanted a drink. "All those phantoms. I wanted houses and cars and boats and solid things, real things. I wanted a wife. I wanted her."

"You weren't her true love," said the

little man.

"How do you know?"

"Because I killed him."

Yeadon's chair skidded back. For a moment he must have thought the little guy was going to kill him right then and there. For a moment I thought so too. The little guy's eyes were doing a slow cold burn, and I found myself headed for the kitchen again.

I leaned on the fridge. My heart was beating far too fast. What the hell were they talking about? Who was she?

There were a bunch of orders that needed taking and a bunch of trays that needed delivering.

I couldn't stand it. I looked through the door. Table two was empty, so I went and pretended I was laying the cutlery and putting the napkins down and stuff.

"You took her away," Yeadon was saying. "She wanted to stay. She would have stayed with me."

"No. She wouldn't have."

"You took her away in your time machine. You abducted her. She didn't want to go."

Definitely too much X-Files.

"Water under the bridge," said the little man. "You should know better than to dwell on the past. She's – grown up. She's not the girl you remember. And you're certainly not the boy she remembers. You buy so much, you don't even know what you own. This café wasn't even here last week. You own part of a spatio-temporal anomaly. If my theory is right, the whole structure of the universe could be in danger."

I was dying to know what he was talking about, but Yeadon wasn't interested. "We were in love."

"You were drawn together by crisis and hormones. I knew you wouldn't stay together."

"How dare you?!" Yeadon's voice was strangled, he was trying so hard not to shout. People were staring anyway. "How could you know?"

"Because I've always known. I had to find out everything about her. I knew who she would love and who she would hate and all the places she would visit. And I know when she dies."

That was when I looked up, over at them. Yeadon had his head in his hands. The little guy was looking right at me. "Oh yes," he breathed, "I know just when she dies."

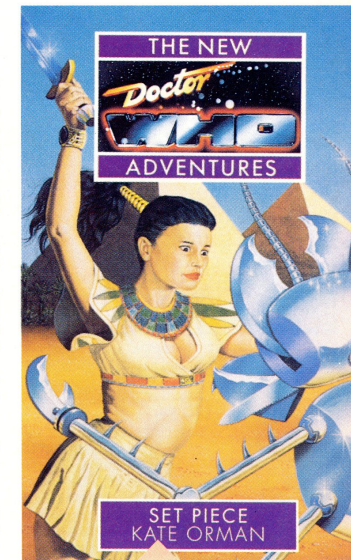
I dropped the knife I was polishing. Suddenly the room wasn't warm any more. You know, I looked into those eyes like I was being hypnotised, and suddenly Yeadon didn't seem crazy at all. He was an alien, and he did travel in time, and when Robin Yeadon was just a kid he stole his girlfriend and flew away in his UFO.

And he knew when she was going to die. And probably when Yeadon would die. And probably when I would die.

I just walked out of there and kept going.

So if you could loan me that hundred bucks, I'd be really grateful.

Kate Orman



Doctor Who –
The New Adventures:

Set Piece

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a cover by Tony Masero. Published by
Virgin/Doctor Who Books
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Prelude INFINITE REQUIEM

If I can just –

He knew he was going to die.

The Phracton warrior was hunched into his floating, globe-shaped module, like a cowering crustacean. Through the numerous feeder tubes surrounding his body, pulse after pulse was pumping into him, telling him...

To end his life.

The warrior's organic part was just a blob of flesh, a twist of wet fibres and gnarled organs. Back on the home-world, this flesh had floundered with shameless joy among the semi-gaseous swamps, the young Phracton inflating himself with the pungent nutrients and casting his tendrils around for his playful primary-mate.

But it had come, as it always did for every young Phracton – the summons to the Centre to enlist as a warrior in the Swarm. And there, in the Hall of Becoming, needles had given the youngster implants of unwanted strength, and cybro-pads fused lobes of his brains into the jewelled connections of the Web. The heart of the Swarm, where the Commandant lurked, exuding strength and reassurance.

He had been briefed for his mis-

sion with other minds, other new initiates into the world of the Swarm. A mission to reclaim a colony rich in Porizium deposits, which had been disgracefully occupied by humans from the Terran Empire. It was to be a battle fought, as always, with honour – a Phracton who killed for pleasure or sport would forever be a disgrace to his Swarm-brothers.

Now, that was all immaterial. For Phracton 3X-877+, the world was about to end.

When his shuttle had impacted with the ground of this backwater asteroid called Gadrell Major, the major feeder to the Swarm had been damaged.

It was clear what he had to do. His organic impulses, unfettered now by the warrior mesh, would be a liability to the Swarm. He was obliged to destroy himself.

He forced his regulators into the danger sector – where they would melt the links, causing his organic matter to swell up like a hideous sponge and explode in the oxygen-rich atmosphere.

He would be found later. Not quite dead.

He would be found by one more evil and more deadly than any human or Phracton warrior.

By one with a power that spanned time and space.

If I can just reach out –

She hoped she was going to live.

The pretty young woman with gleaming, mercury-coloured hair trod carefully through the library Stacks, her read-out flickering in one hand. The Stacks were old, and smelled of paper, dirt, heat and unopened windows. She could almost taste the age of the library in the dust that settled on her tongue.

She took a handful of disks from one of the towering shelves and leafed through them without much apparent interest. For a moment she let them sit in her hand as if she were somehow absorbing the ancient knowledge by osmosis, but then she let them fall to the floor with a clatter.

She shook her head. There was no point.

Something tickled the back of her neck. She gasped, whirled round with finely-tuned reactions.

A stream of dark, greyish dust fell vertically in front of her. She extended a hand. It caressed her skin with a soft greasiness, and she recognised the sand from the surface.

And now, as she listened carefully, she could hear sounds from high above...

A dull, repeated boom like stone being shattered. She felt herself shake with fear as she rubbed the slippery sand between her fingers.

So. It had started. There was, in that case, one vital thing to be done.

She activated her tracker again and soon found the relevant section of the Stacks. Here, electronic media sat beside ancient volumes on real paper, bound in cloth. She found what she was looking for – the collected works of a particular dead writer from Earth. Her hand ran along the gold embossing, until she touched Volume Sixteen. Officially, there were only fifteen volumes in the set, but she had a purpose for the extra one.

She reached it down, turned the spine

towards her and snapped the stiff leather open. In the padded box within the fake book there was a slim, silver pistol. The girl smiled, pocketed the gun, and headed back towards the ladder which would return her to the surface.

If I can just reach out and –

Through the storms of time, through impossible gateways, a battered blue police-box whirled.

Inside there lurked another dimension, a universe of silence. Within the smooth and functional console-room with its roundelled walls, nothing stirred. Orange light bathed it, a dim parody of its usual brightness.

The craft had occupants, but they were not easily located. One, a passenger, was exploring new areas of the craft, but she was about to stumble once more upon a familiar room full of outlandish clothes, containing something very unusual indeed.

The other was the pilot and owner. He had not been seen by the passenger for several days.

But there he was, like a hint of himself, like a ghost. He stood, silent and still, deep within the craft – in a stone-

grey, water-blue chamber. It resembled a neo-Gothic sculpture of the main console room, and the owner stood at its centre, barely perceptible, his impish face bathed in blue light.

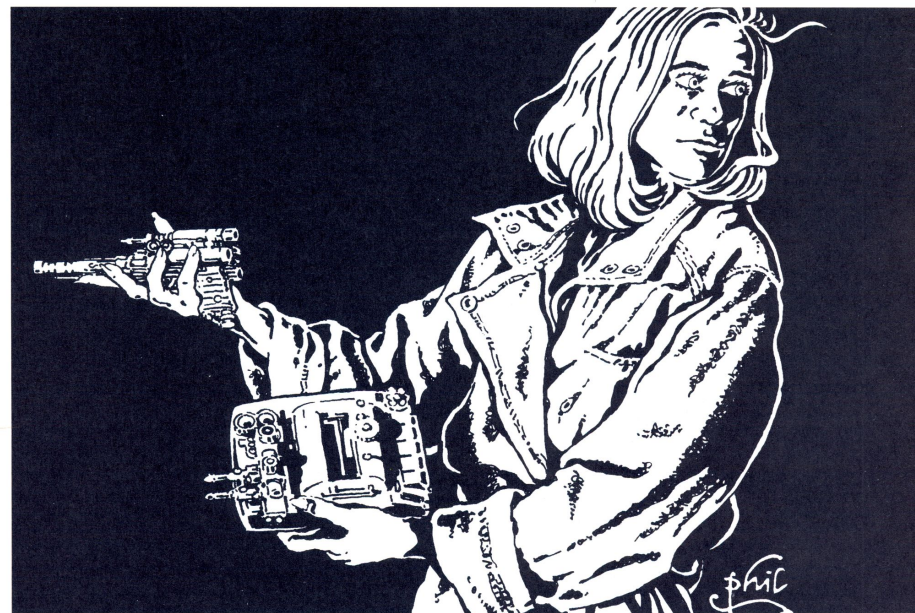
He was calm, recuperating. His hands were folded together and the jewel on his ring pulsed with light, illuminating the stonework like the cursor of some gigantic computer-program coursing through the time-les systems.

He was gathering his strength.

If I can just reach out and touch you. Gone. Splintering into the light and shadow of time, fluttering away like some short-lived insect.

But I have the feeling we shall meet again, soon.

Daniel Blythe



**Doctor Who –
The New Adventures:**

**Infinite
Requiem**

Written by **Daniel Blythe**,

with a cover by

Barry Jones

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Prelude SANCTUARY



'Someday, I'm going to hire a First Mate to do this sort of thing,' Lisa Nguyen paused to shift her gunbelt so that the blaster didn't scrape along the duct grating, and started crawling again. The inspection lights flickered briefly as her shoulders rattled the cable that was pinned to the ceiling, and she froze. A faint rhythmic pounding of limbs on metal echoed along the duct, closing slowly but inexorably. 'Computer, is it just me or is that life-form on the move?'

'Life-signs are now in motion,' the computer's voice came back over the intercom. 'Anomalous life-form is currently traversing inspection-way theta seven.'

'Must be heading for the filtration plant again, which means it has to come through here.' She wondered why she felt glad of that – getting trapped in the ducts with some hungry bug-eyed monster wasn't one of her reasons for going into the Spacer business. Wincing as she banged her elbow against the side of the duct, Nguyen tugged the blaster free, and rested it on the floor in front of her. If the creature turned out to be hostile...

She slipped off the safety as the metal tunnel she was crammed into started to vibrate. Breathing became distinctly audible ahead. Perhaps, she thought, it'd be better to shoot first – out here you didn't get second chances... Up ahead, something pale appeared under one of the inspection lights, its mouth a dark 'O'. It suddenly froze as it saw Nguyen. She hoped it couldn't tell how slippery the blaster's butt felt under her palm. She propped herself up on her

elbows to get a better shot, her finger tightening on the trigger as the life-form's front limbs came up.

'Don't shoot!' it yelled, the voice deafening in the confined duct. Nguyen's thumb reflexively put the safety back on an instant before her finger equally reflexively hit the trigger. She felt the blood drain from her face as the girl came closer.

'Shades, kid, I nearly fried you,' Nguyen complained bitterly, a shocked guilt overtaking her. She re-holstered the blaster and started pushing herself backwards, beckoning to the girl who crouched stock-still ahead of her. 'Come on. This isn't a Corporation ship, I'm not going to toss you out of an airlock.' Though I might be tempted to after that shock, she added mentally.

After a few minutes' severe sweating, Nguyen clambered back out into the ship's hold and straightened up with some uncomfortable popping sounds before bending to help the girl out of the inspection duct. The girl had dark hair cut boyishly short, and didn't look much older than fifteen or sixteen. Though stained and worn, her clothes were clearly a Spacefleet cadet uniform. 'Most runaways from the Academy back here just slip me a few grots to look the other way when they come on board. I've never nearly shot one of them on a bug-hunt,' she added pointedly.

'You mean there really is no such thing as a free launch?'

'I think I will toss you out the airlock,' Nguyen grumbled with a wince. She shook her head, recalling how desperate she herself had been to get her first flight. She wished she'd thought of stowing away

– it would have been less painful in the long run. She envied this one's guts, if she was going to be honest with herself. 'All right,' she said slowly, hoping she sounded suitably put-upon and reluctant. 'We're far enough out from Beta Capris that taking you back there would cut into my profits, so I guess you can stay aboard as far as Salostophus. There are always odd jobs to be done, especially on a military surplus ship like this, and if you behave yourself I might even pay you a wage.'

The girl nodded. 'Sounds fair, Captain...?'

'And I thought you'd picked my ship specially for the sparkling company, or is it just that you like second-hand Tramp Freighters? Lisa Nguyen, but if we're going to be cooped up in here for the next three weeks, you'd best just call me Nguyen. There's a cabin where you can bunk just along past the main lock; I always sleep on the flight deck anyway.'

'Just in case?'

'Exactly. Now, are you going to tell me your name, or will I just shout, "hey you"?''

'Summerfield. Bernice Summerfield.'

'That's hellishly long-winded. Welcome aboard the *Faithful Pet*, Benny,' Nguyen said on the spur of the moment, holding out her hand. Benny shook it.

Guy de Carnac wondered briefly if the star that flashed across the sky was a soul traversing the heavens, or merely a star that had fallen from there. He hoped it was the former, as then it might even be that of the girl whose eyes stared up from the muddy riverbank.

The old man watched silently as de Carnac closed her eyes and straightened, ignoring the water that soaked his armour. 'Why did she not say something?'

'What could she? These things happen; it is the way of the world.'

De Carnac reached for his sword-belt which he had hung on a bankside tree. 'That is as may be, but it is not my way.'

The old man stood aside with visible reluctance as de Carnac lifted the girl and carried her up towards the farm.

'And what is your way, might I ask? What are you thinking of?'

De Carnac paused, looking back at the frail and bald figure. 'Guess,' he suggested icily.

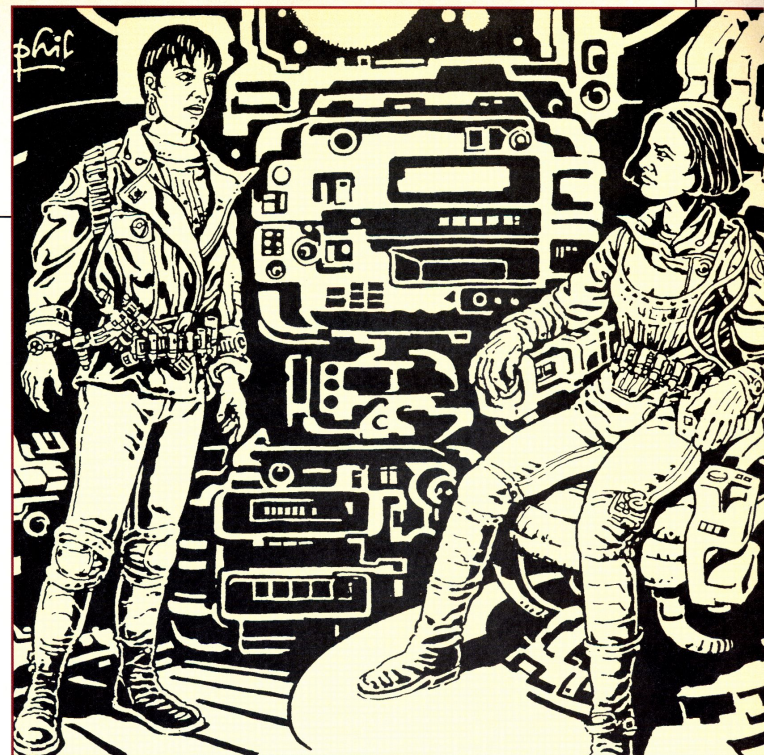
The stars blurred and streaked as the wings of the *Faithful Pet* shifted out of atmospheric flight position as she leapt into hyperspace. On the flight deck's navigation computer screen, Lisa Nguyen could see a dirty brown globe displayed. 'Who would want to tramp around on a mudball like that?' she muttered to herself, leaning back in the seat and letting the autosystems take over now that the jump to warp was complete.

The archaeological group now embarked consider Camus II to be of great value.

'That was a rhetorical question, computer. I suppose I really meant why would a bunch of academics want to come here aboard my ship. This is a military surplus scout, after all; hardly a liner – no offence.'

'I picked it specially for the sparkling company, Nguyen.' Nguyen looked round quickly. Was she getting so old that her hearing was playing tricks? 'And I like second-hand Tramp Freighters.'

The woman that faced her looked to be just past her quarter-century, but the tomboyish haircut was still there as she remembered. 'Benny Summerfield? Shades, kid; you must have done well for



yourself.' Nguyen grinned as Benny dropped into the vacant co-pilot's seat. A thought struck her. 'Don't tell me you're the Professor Summerfield all the stiffs have been talking about in the hold for the past three hours?'

'The one and only.'

'What happened to the other guy who was supposed to be along in charge... Kyle, or whatever it was?'

'He couldn't make it,' Benny answered curtly. Nguyen looked at her narrowly; she might be nearly forty, but she wasn't going blind or deaf.

'Is that why you picked my ship?' Nguyen smiled, hoping Benny would realise she wasn't really pushing for information. 'Running away again?'

Benny hesitated, looking out at the approaching planet which was still several hours off. 'Making a strategic withdrawal.'

'Well, I'm flattered that you liked my run-away service so much you decided to stick with it... At least for the moment.'

'As I said, I like the company,' Benny sighed. 'And you can't really run away from yourself, can you?'

'Not on this ship,' Nguyen admitted with more than a touch of concern. 'Some things follow you wherever you go. You just have to face them down.'

'Next time, maybe,' Benny agreed reluctantly. 'If I'm that stupid.'

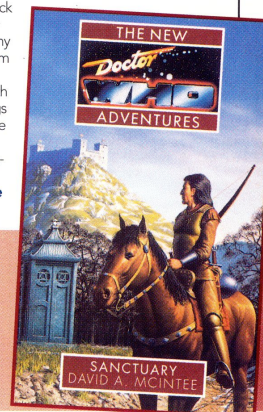
David A McIntee

The New Doctor Who Adventures Sanctuary

Written by David A McIntee

with a cover by Peter Elson.

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Prelude HUMAN NATURE



Alexander Shuttlesworth leaned back in the easy chair and drummed his fingers rhythmically on his stomach. 'You may call it cake,' he told his small audience, regarding the small saucer with the last few crumbs that sat on his lap, 'but it goes beyond cake. Call it Ultrasponge, Victoria Maximus, empress of icing sugar.'

The ladies of Joan Redfern's WI group looked at him and then at each other nervously. A few giggled or laughed in a more civilised fashion. Alexander felt as if he was addressing a flock of sheep in hatpins.

'Well, Mr Shuttlesworth,' Joan began, replacing her own plate delicately on the table, 'may we move on to the subject of our talk for today, the archaeology of the bronze age?'

One of the ladies leaned over to her friend and whispered in her ear. 'I can't imagine what Joan was thinking of, inviting that man into our circle. One might as well call upon the Serbs to come and ravage us all.'

'Oh, I don't know,' the younger woman replied. 'I think he's quite sweet.'

'That's what all his conquests think, all those young girls ruined in their prime. His reputation should preclude him from the Institute.'

'Reputations!' roared Alexander, causing the two ladies to jump guiltily from each other's ear. 'Reputations are made and broken in British archaeology on the matter of Bronze Age burials. Are we looking at a matriarchal culture, the kind of thing that led to Boadicea's easy assumption of the reins of power... or do we deal with chieftains?' He had stood up now, pacing back and forth before the curtains of the little front room in the sunshine.

'Perhaps the inhabitants of long barrows are not even warriors, but priests... Oh, hullo, Wolsey.'

He bent to smooth back the ears of the tabby cat that was rubbing itself against his ankles.

'She's quite infra dig herself, of course.' The older woman had quietly resumed her conversation with her fellow. 'Mrs Redfern, I mean. A thoroughly decent sort.'

'Mrs?' The younger woman was surprised.

'Widow. Her husband died in the campaign against the Boer.'

'And do you think that she has plans to civilise the notorious Mr Shuttlesworth?'

'Goodness, no! I hope not, anyhow. If she aims to remarry, then I'm sure she must pick a more honourable soul. I have heard that she is linked to Mr Rocastle, her employer.'

'The headmaster? He's a bit stiff.'

'He doesn't go up in flying machines carrying piglets, if that's what you mean.'

The younger woman stared at her, open-mouthed. 'How did you come to hear of that? I was ever so slightly squiffy, but -'

'Piglets!' called Shuttlesworth, standing to his full height once more. 'Sheep! And even horse skulls have been found in burial mounds. Now, were these animals owned by the incumbents?'

Joan was following his gestures politely, sipping at her tea, but her thoughts were elsewhere. Last night she had had a dream.

She taught science at Hulton College, and she disliked it, all those chemical mixtures, and no idea of anything behind it. Like the world was reducible to simple elements. She wasn't tremendously fond of the open declamation of ethics and, while watching all those young boys destined to be military officers mixing chemicals, she often associated the two. Two parts this to one part that, God and country and a straight back. No inner knowledge of what made these things elements, no questioning of how God's goodness translated into things like patriotism and bravery.

Maybe when she met Arthur again in heaven she'd gain an understanding of the greater things, but for now she hated honour and sacrifice, the things that had made him die proudly. She knew the other women linked her and Rocastle. He'd proposed, the foolish man. That had made her life harder.

But she had her dream. She'd dreamt of the constellations, of

Orion hunting the animals. Amongst them was a new one, a group made up of stars from here and there, with two red nebulous hearts. A man had stood looking, staring up at Orion with a mixture of awe and whimsy on his face; a very British expression. He seemed also to be looking down at the spring of 1914.

What had made this dream memorable was that the constellation was in some way associated - this was the unique thing about dreams, that they could suggest the feeling of association without any real connection - with Dr John Smith, Joan's new colleague at the school, the history teacher. Joan had woken up from that sleep feeling quite flushed but refreshed, as if something pure and distant had come to her like a falling star.

Inspiration, in its most literal sense, had filled her, and the notion it brought that morning was that, for the first time in several years, she no longer felt quite so alone.

Dr Smith was small and Scottish, from Aberdeen as a matter of fact, and he had a charmingly mobile face. Full of laughter. If it ever stayed still, it would present a truly terrible image, a frightening strength. But it never did stop moving.

That would be bad, if it stopped. Like a tiger. As it stood, he was the sort of man that one wanted to mother. Very vulnerable, but with that potential to be exceedingly strong. A tiger cub, then.

'Cubs, and their master -' Alexander stopped, turned a fraction, and looked down at Joan, puzzled. 'I say, I haven't said anything too risqué, have I?'

'No...!' Joan flinched, broken out of her daydream. 'Why do you say that, Mr Shuttlesworth?'

'Because, my dear, you're blushing.'

'Oh,' Joan picked up Wolsey, and smoothed his fur, aware of the eyes of the other women on her. 'It's a medical condition.'

Paul Cornell

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